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THOMAS D. WHITTLES

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FRANK HIGGINS

"WHILE IN THE EAST HE MIGHT, PERHAPS, HAVE PASSED FOR AN EASTERNER; BUT EVEN WHEN FAR FROM THE PINERIES, HIS THOUGHTS WERE EVER WITH 'HIS BOYS,' AND HE REJOICED WHEN THE TIME CAME TO SHOULDER HIS PACK-SACK AND TRAMP TO THE CAMPS." (page 142)

FRANK HIGGINS

TRAIL BLAZER

BY

THOMAS D. WHITTLES

AUTHOR OF

"THE PARISH OF THE PINES"



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To LEONARD AND THE TEEN AGE YOUTH,
LOVERS OF HEROES, DREAMERS OF ACTION,
WITH A HOPE THAT IN "UNCLE FRANK"
THEY MAY KNOW A MAN SENT FROM GOD.

AUG 7-1941

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Many of the interesting incidents and conversations in this volume have already appeared from the pen of the author in "The Parish of the Pines, The Story of Frank Higgins, the Lumberjack's Pilot", published by the Fleming H. Revell Company, by whose permission the same are used in this book.



FOREWORD

For many years Frank Higgins and I were close companions. To my home he came often, to rest from the demanding labors of the camps. Together we traveled the trails to the lumber districts and in the evenings preached in the crowded bunk houses. In the green-circled lakes of the northland we fished, forgetful of care; in the mountain camps we lent each other the warmth of our bodies when the nights were bitter and the covering all too inadequate; under summer skies we slept side by side with the gossamer air for a sheltering tent; and in many cities we unitedly presented the needs of the camp mission. In work and play, in camp and city, in palace and shack, Higgins was always the same—natural, interesting, zealous for his “boys,” a man among men, were they hoboes or millionaires.

Many of the incidents narrated in the following pages came under my personal observation. With all parts of his field of labor I am intimately acquainted through personal visits and investigation. The material presented in this book was

FOREWORD

gathered first-hand and is not a borrowed collection of data. It is the testimony of an eye-witness.

This is a brief introduction to the man I knew and loved; and with it goes the hope that all of my readers may derive inspiration from Frank Higgins' labors and feel a new interest in the lonely campmen to whom he gladly gave his ungrudging service.

THOMAS D. WHITTLES.

*Forest Farm,
Duluth, Minn.*



I

A FISHING TRIP AND WHAT CAME OF IT

FRANK HIGGINS went fishing in Kettle River and was hooked by a big idea.

Northern Minnesota, where the Kettle flows, abounds in evergreen forests, crystal lakes, rolling hills, and clean streams. All the north country is charming, but when variety is added, as here it is, then imagination breathes deep and a new vision of beauty is born.

At Kettle River Frank Higgins found himself and found his future task—a task which made him known to the Christian church and to a great host of men who, by ax and saw, contribute to the world's comfort and wealth. And because Higgins found himself, thousands of lumberjacks found God.

The glory of Kettle River has departed. It

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passed with the fall of its ancient pines, with the opening of its shores to the once forbidden sunbeams, with the retreat of the red men, and with the coming of the wide, unshaded fields, now rich with grain. Not many years ago Northern Minnesota was a primitive paradise, undisturbed by noise of mill, unmarred by soot of foundry, while under the heaven-saluting trees the timid deer found a retreat and in the Kettle's waters refreshed themselves.

There was vast wealth on the Kettle's banks; man needed the tall trees, and Kettle River furnished a pathway from the solitudes to civilization, where lumber could be exchanged for dollars. So with ax and saw men entered the forest. Rude camps were erected near the waters, the crash of falling trees awoke the echoes, roads pushed broad brown lines among the evergreens—all roads leading to the Kettle, whose quiet had been invaded by a host of shouting, swearing lumber-jacks.

Convenient to the river and to forest roads, tar-paper villages sprang into being, with stores, saloons, warehouses, shops, and every agent that caters to the endless demands of men. Good people supplied the honest needs of decent folk, and unscrupulous people preyed on the weaknesses of humanity. The best and worst were there, and

often the worst were in the majority, because law was weak in the new villages.

Barnum, Minnesota, was new—very new. Large lumber camps grew up near its doors and Kettle River was not far away. In Barnum the restless lumberjacks spent their money and, while spending it, created a wild havoc born of whisky and evil. Here the camps bought outfits for man and beast; here the honest man found companionship and the vicious found here a place to ply his will.

Among this motley humanity the Presbytery of Duluth established a church. Several missionaries labored here for a brief time, then passed on to more promising fields; for Barnum in its lusty youth gave little encouragement to ministers. So the little church, balancing between life and death, was often without a preacher and often raised the Macedonian cry, “Come and help us.” And Frank Higgins heard its plea.

Higgins had met with many ups and downs. He was sure he was called to the ministry, but he had not succeeded in convincing others that the call was of God. However, he was willing to tackle anything, and the Presbytery of Duluth asked him to undertake this forlorn hope. The Presbytery hardly expected him to succeed; there was little in him that promised success and there was less in

Barnum on which to build successfully. Still, the church could hardly hurt Higgins and Higgins could hardly hurt the church, so the chances of loss were small. And then, he might be the man for the place!

He was. The unpromising man in the unpromising village had been divinely selected to blaze a new trail.

When the church people in Barnum first saw Frank Higgins, they were frankly disappointed. He did not look like a minister. His hands were big and rough, his face ruddy with outdoor life, there was a woodsman's slouch in his walk, and the lines of his face, kindly and laughing, bore little of conventional solemnity. An additional doubt arose from his evident need of education, his faulty grammar, and his carelessly chosen words; while his thought lacked nicety, and there was the element of the street in his speech.

The men of the village and the wandering lumberjacks hailed him gladly, finding in him a choice spirit who did not shun them because of their weaknesses. His hand was open to the prodigal loafer and to the careless vagabond. His rough kindnesses touched even the vampire tribe that live on the vices of men, and while he opposed them with all his power, they still gave him respect. There was no doubt about it; Frank Hig-

gins was "different" from any minister that Barnum had seen.

Higgins never followed the usual routine; he was always doing the unexpected; and therefore he became a fruitful topic for discussion at the sewing circle, the back-fence forum, in the saloons, and in the far-off camps. Everybody agreed that he was unusual. They also agreed that he feared neither man nor devil, and when he preached, his remarks had the force of a sledge-hammer.

His religion consisted more of service than of expounding theology; his hand was more eloquent than his voice, and his heart gave greater help than his mind. Whatever else men said or thought of Higgins, they agreed that he was striving to make religion an every-day affair, and his love for men was the motive power.

In the spring of 1895, Martin Cain, who operated a camp of woodsmen on Kettle River, invited Higgins to his camp where the men were driving logs.

"You'll find it worth while to watch the 'river pigs' at work," said Cain, using the name by which the rivermen are commonly called.

"It will all be new to me," replied Higgins. "I have never been on the drive. I was raised in a timber country, but know nothing about the river side of logging."

"And the fishing is not to be sneezed at," smiled Cain, who had heard of the preacher's love for the rod and reel.

"That settles it! I'll go with you the next time you come in." Higgins was already anticipating the pleasure.

A few days later Mr. Higgins accompanied the logger. He went, expecting fine fishing. He was led, unconsciously, to his life work.

The ride led through rough, cut-over lands, it bordered the lakes, and wound between the stumps. Settlers were few and far apart in that new country, a country rich with a wide variety of hill and dale, lake and woodland. But the river soon came in sight, and with it came the noise of grinding, grumbling logs as they caught in the shallows or bumped their way through the narrow channel.

In midstream the rivermen were "sacking" logs; that is, helping them over the shallows or directing them with pikepole into the deeper waters. The skilful workers leaped like squirrels from floating log to floating log, keeping their positions on the charging, plunging timbers speeding through the white water. With such sure-footedness they performed this difficult task that it seemed easy, but only a master can ride the rushing, free-flung stream.

In a sheltered bend lay the wannigan, or float-



"HE HAD SEEN COUNTLESS GREAT LOGS HELD FAST BY THE ICE,
AND HE HAD SEEN THEM ON THEIR WAY DOWN THE RIVER, WHEN
SPRING HAD SET THEM FREE" (page 52)

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ing storehouse, containing the necessary equipment of clothing, tools, kitchen utensils, food, and bedding; and near it, on the grassy, shelving shore, were the tents and the camp fire.

Here, warmed by the blazing logs, the dripping rivermen ate their supper, while the ruddy glow of evening added comfort to the scene. In that sunset hour, as the lingering light threw a rosy glow over the drowsy forest and the never-sleepy river, Mr. Higgins received a strange request.

The men asked him to preach. They were a profane, godless lot, whose careless blasphemy and coarse speech made the preacher feel that they cared nothing for religion or goodness. If they had asked him to join them in a poker game, it would have seemed consistent; but to have them ask for a sermon was, for the moment, unbelievable.

“It was the last crowd on the face of the earth from which to expect such a demand,” said Mr. Higgins when speaking of the experience later. “I thought it was a joke. But they meant it, so I swallowed my surprise and delivered the goods.”

There, in the temple of pines, canopied with living green, columned with aisles of trees, Higgins preached his first sermon to the men of the northern forests. The evening lent its “dim, religious light” and the quiet of the hour was on tree and

water. Nature was worshiping, and sinful men would join in the Creator's praise.

Mounting a log, Higgins opened the service without the aid of Bible or hymn-book, and

“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

rolled through the lacing evergreens like the waves of a mighty sea, as the men lustily lifted the song in the fading sunset. They were pleased with their own efforts and asked for more. They chose the hymns they knew best,—the songs of childhood, learned in the days before sin had marred their hands and hearts. They selected

“Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!”

It played upon the heart-strings as the men sang it in the far-off forest, their toil-hardened faces softened under the touch of memories. The running stream and the quivering tree-tops faded from sight. They were boys again in the glad days of childhood. Over the darkening river the music of lonely hearts wandered into the dying distance, and the stately pines echoed back the earnest prayer,

“O, receive my soul at last.”

The song suggested the sermon, and Higgins spoke of Jesus, the Lover of Wanderers—man's great Lover, whose love is like a mother's, but deeper, truer, more lasting, and more rare. In Higgins' voice there was always a sympathy like a woman's, and his hearers were carried back to the days of mother and home and the springs of youth. While Higgins presented the tender story of sacrificial love, the night shadows gathered nearer and the flickering firelight played on earnest faces. Wishes became prayers, and longings were born that became conversions. One of the "river pigs" who listened by the dying fire afterward entered the Christian ministry.

A second surprise came as Higgins was leaving camp. The rivermen asked him to come and preach again!

"We're off here in the timber and the church don't often come our way, but it's welcome," said one of them.

"If some preacher would drop in occasionally, he could give us a lift. The Lord knows we need it," laughed one of the rivermen to hide his embarrassment.

"What's the matter with *you* doing the turn?" they asked. Did this incident bring to Higgins' mind a thought of Peter and Andrew leaving their fishing-nets to become "fishers of men?"

After this invitation, the preacher often visited the rivermen. Their work was strange to him, but he joined in it. His unsuccessful attempts to ride the floating logs aroused their merriment. When the preacher mounted a "south-bound stick," they joyfully awaited the moment when "his reverence" would frantically beat the air and then disappear beneath the waiting waters. A dripping preacher was an unusual sight and Higgins was often unusual. But laughter did not stop him. He knew that men who labor with their hands give better attention to the man who is master of their art. He wanted their admiration so they would admire his message the more. Many sudden, chilly baths and bruising tumbles were his before the rivermen spoke of the preacher as a man of their own sort, but the coveted words came at last.

The "river pigs" often spent Sunday in Barnum and Higgins wished to see them in his church.

"When you visit the village I want you fellows to remember me," he said. "My home and my church are open to you and you are as welcome as the people in town."

Shortly afterward, three big rivermen, dressed in their working togs, strode into the little church and took seats in the rear. In those days the river pigs were more picturesque than now.

Their garments were highly colored and the broad belts and high-laced boots added to the striking effect. Naturally, they created a sensation among the worshipers, and the woodsmen enjoyed the sensation. Barnum had seen thousands of lumberjacks in its streets; this was the first time it had seen them in its church.

Higgins gave the visitors a whole-souled welcome and his hospitality bore fruit in later days. The three men brought others, and presently Barnum began to look upon their visits to the church as a commonplace occurrence. The coming of the woodsmen proved to Higgins that a minister who wants a larger field must first take down the fence that encloses his present one; so Higgins got busy removing the barbed-wire entanglements that interfered with the desired invasion.

The following autumn a delegation of lumberjacks came to the preacher's home and asked him to conduct regular services in their camp.

"We need you as much as that crew of drivers you preached to in the spring," said the speaker.

As Higgins looked into their lonely, sin-marked faces, his big heart went out to them, for they were as sheep without a shepherd, and his promise to preach was gladly given.

All the camps near Barnum were soon asking

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for Higgins. At that time, lumber camps by the hundred were operating in the state, and none save the nine to which he ministered were receiving the gospel message. Higgins was finding himself and the men were finding God.



II

AS THE TWIG WAS BENT

THIS chapter deals with the green and callow years of Frank Higgins' boyhood and carries the Lumberjacks' Sky Pilot from birth to Barnum, Minnesota.

Frank Higgins, bright, sympathetic, and companionable, was a prince of good fellows, yet this prince was not born in a palace. His first weak little cry was uttered in a hotel and it may have even penetrated to the "saloon end" of the building, which, as far as business was concerned, was the principal part of the establishment. To quote from Higgins, "I got a good start in my hatred for the liquor business and saw its results in early childhood."

Back in the "60's" of the last century, Samuel and Ann Higgins ran the old Walker House of

Toronto, Ontario. Both were of Irish blood. The wife came from Ulster, Ireland, when a child of four years. The husband, however, was born in the Dominion of Canada. The nineteenth day of August, 1865, was a great day at the old Walker House. The proprietor celebrated the birth of a son and named the lusty youngster Francis Edmund Higgins. Francis Edmund was the seventh child of the family, the others dying in early childhood.

Then came the death of Higgins' father, and during her two years of widowhood, the mother continued the hotel business, but it proved a losing venture. Finally she married John Castle, who moved the family into the wilds of Ontario, where they settled on land which had fallen to the boy Frank by inheritance. They took up life in an untouched wilderness with few white settlers and fewer advantages. The land was covered with a forest of cedar, hemlock, maple, and birch. With laborious efforts, the growth of ages was squared into timbers for cabins and sheds, and the fields were cleared and made ready for the needed grain.

The country was new and white settlers were distant, but the Indians were near, several camps of them being on the Higgins homestead. The Indian children naturally became the boyhood

friends of young Higgins. From them he learned the secrets of the bow, the arts of the wood, the ways of wild things, and the cunning craft of the forest breed. Once he secretly took a loaf of bread from his home and traded it with an Indian youth for a much-coveted bow and arrows. The theft being discovered, punishment followed which fixed all parts of the incident in memory. For three years the Indians lived near the home-stead. To them Frank was indebted for his fearlessness, his love for forest and stream, and his large kinship with the great out-of-doors.

School privileges were rare. When he should have been at his studies, there was no school to attend; when the school came, only brief periods of instruction were allowed him. But this did not trouble Frank Higgins. He was not "hankerin' for book larnin'" in those days, and never burned pine knots that he might read the few books of the household, as so many great men are said to have done. He was more interested in nature than in printed paper, and the portals of the forest were more inviting than the doors of the schoolroom. He was wild and free, ignorant of the power of books, an unawakened child who needed a teacher to show him the world's great treasure-house of knowledge.

At twelve years of age he took his place at his

stepfather's side and assisted in the support of the family. The ground had to be cleared of trees and underbrush; there were rails to split, fields to fence, stock to tend, sowing and harvesting to be done—and every hand counted for much in taming the wilderness. The lad was strong and willingly lent himself to the demands.

Most of the settlers were of English blood. They could not afford amusements, but they were willing to sacrifice for the church, and one was organized near the Castle home. John and Ann Castle gave it their united support and rejoiced in its coming.

Frank's stepfather was a simple farmer with a large soul. He loved the farm and the neighbors, and thought it no sacrifice to spend himself for others. When there was no one else to speak in the schoolhouse, John Castle took the vacant place and willingly did his best to instruct in righteousness. Of education he had little, but his delightful desire to be of service impressed the whole community and inspired many a soul to love the truth. In his corner he let his candle shine, gladdening many by its light.

"Under God, no man did more for me than John Castle," said Frank in later days. "It was he who led mother and me to the Savior, and whatever of good is in me, is due largely to him."

Do not, for a moment, think that John Castle's life was one of roses and sweet happenings, for Frank Higgins was every inch a boy—and then some! He was bubbling over with life, and in that life was all the mischief common to wide-awake boyhood. He loved his stepfather devotedly, but that did not save the head of the house from Frank's mischievous activities.

Among the joys that came into the boy's life was the gift of a young ram. Frank immediately saw certain possibilities, and, with a devotion worthy of a better cause, he gave himself to the ram's education. He was more willing that it should acquire knowledge than he was to improve himself. The ram proved an apt pupil, learning with ease and forgetting little, and the boy was immensely proud of its attainments and not a little vain over his own ability as a teacher. But the neighbors never entered the Castle dooryard without first making sure that the way of retreat was open and a place of refuge near at hand. And there were times when a refuge was needed.

One evening when nature smiled peacefully on a tired world, Frank, near the barn, was playing with the ram; not far away John Castle, wrapped in meditation, milked the cow. The eyes of the boy fell on the poetic picture of the quiet cow, the thoughtful milker, and the rapidly filling pail. It

suggested an idea—an idea that would not down. Frank was tempted; and Frank was more prone to yield to temptation that promised fun than he was to resist it.

He saw a chance for a practical joke and he took it. The ram seemed to catch the idea, and—with a quick rush—it scattered stool and pail and milk and man.

When John Castle emerged from the confusion and took his bearings, the real cause of the disturbance was hugging himself behind the barn, and the sheep was innocently grazing in the nearby garden. In later years, when one of his own sheep treated Higgins to the same surprise, he remembered the boyhood incident and remarked, as he readjusted himself, “It was a long time coming, but that ought to square John Castle’s account against me.”

Long before his conversion, Frank Higgins cherished a secret and unsuspected ambition. He wanted to preach; he wished it with all the power of his soul. There was nothing in his every-day life that suggested his desire, for he was harum-scarum, prankish, and cared nothing for books; nevertheless, the desire was fixed. The ministers who passed through the settlement stopped at Frank’s home, and to their visits may probably be traced the origin of his wish. It could hardly

be due to their talks with him, for he avoided the house when they were present, fearing the probe they too often inserted into his life. Yet he admired these self-sacrificing messengers who came to cheer and help the scattered settlers and in his heart he wished to be like them. Some of the neighbors predicted that the boy would become a politician; others who had suffered from his many pranks were positive that he would some day be hanged; but even the most indulgent of his friends never dreamed of the ministry as the outlet of his energies. The ministry is a life of service for others, and thus far Frank had not shown the spirit of a ministering angel.

He wished to preach and preach he did; not to men, but to the stock on the farm and to the trees of the wilderness. Whenever he heard a message that pleased him, he tried to give it to his silent audiences, always making sure that no human hearers were near who could interrupt or gossip about it afterward. The patient cattle received his stirring words and watched his frantic gestures without protest, and the trees, being accustomed to the powerful winds of heaven, gave little heed to the shouting youth.

Once, when working in a distant clearing, he felt that there was a fine place to preach a sermon. The stumps suggested a waiting congregation

and he began to address them. It was a still day, and, as the enthusiasm of the speaker increased, his voice traveled over the field to the barn where John Castle and the hired man were working. Peeping through the cracks in the barn, they discovered Frank preaching as if his life depended on it. The watchers were amused by his actions, but wishing to hear his words, they crept through the underbrush and hid themselves behind some stumps. The preacher, "carried away by his own eloquence," chided the stumps for their inactivity and useless lives. He bade them reform and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Before them was the Land of Promise waiting to be possessed. "Arise!" he cried. "Be men; step out and take possession."

The hidden listeners accepted the invitation, thrust their heads above the stumps, and looked solemnly at the speaker.

Frank's arms stopped in midair. He was surprised into sudden silence. Then confusion seized him; and he who a moment before was willing to lead an army of stumps into Canaan, fled to the shelter of the forest, pursued by the laughter of his listeners.

When Frank Higgins was eighteen years old, a wave of religion swept through the sparsely-settled county of Dufferin and he was one of

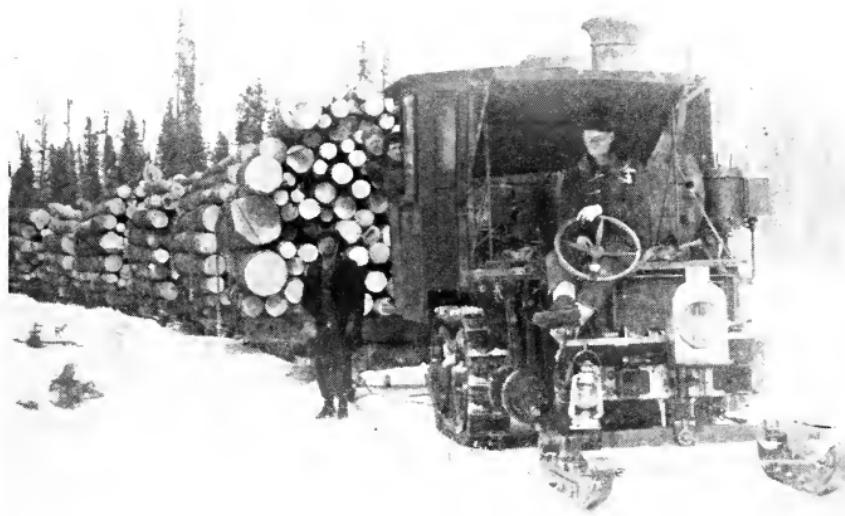
the first to surrender himself to Christ. With his conversion a new spirit was born. Life was filled with a new meaning. He had been introduced to a needy world—a world that needed more than all else his new-found Man of Galilee.

Having found a treasure, he desired to share his wealth, and his labors with his companions resulted in the conversion of many. These young men organized a semi-weekly prayer-meeting in the schoolhouse, and Higgins took charge of the first gathering, speaking on the verse, "To you that believe He is precious." Loving companionship with God was his theme. Knowing the man that Higgins became, it seems typical that his first personal message after meeting his Master should have dealt with love, for love was the keynote of Higgins' whole ministry.

Those schoolhouse meetings in that obscure community were destined to be of wide influence. Higgins became fixed in his purpose to preach, and others developed a similar ambition. Out of those little gatherings came nine ministers who carried the gospel into parts of Canada, the United States, and even beyond seas. With a few such prayer-meetings to-day, there would be no scarcity of candidates for the ministry. But perhaps it would be necessary to have present in each of them a lad with the spirit of Frank Higgins.

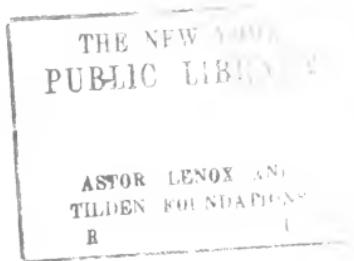
With Higgins' conversion came a desire for an education. Books, for which he had heretofore cared little, became of interest. Two years passed, and when he entered the public schools of Toronto, he was twenty years old—a man among children of the sixth grade. The lessons which the children mastered with ease were difficult for him. All his life had been spent in the open. His hands were accustomed to the plow; he was ill at ease with the pen. His poor progress shamed him, but gritting his teeth, he pluckily kept at his task. After five years spent in the Toronto schools, he returned home, a young man of twenty-five, no longer able to resist an overmastering desire to preach.

A man was needed to serve the Rosemount Circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church. No one else was willing to shepherd the needy group, and Higgins hailed the opportunity as a real opening. He gave his best, but his best did not satisfy. He lacked too much. His deficiencies were too apparent. He tried hard, very hard, and failed. Higgins wanted to serve and no one wanted his services. "The powers that be" refused to renew his license to preach and gave three reasons for their action: "He was too ignorant, he was too old to study for the ministry, and he had no religion." A dispiriting trio of reasons!



“HUGE LOADS ARE CARRIED FROM THE SKIDWAY TO THE LANDING,
BY MEANS OF FOUR-HORSE SLEDS” (page 56)

“IN THE HIGHLAND LOGGING OPERATIONS OF THE FAR WEST, THE
HAULING IS DONE BY POWERFUL DONKEY-ENGINES” (page 57)



This ought to have discouraged Frank Higgins and proved the folly of his wish. It would have crushed an ordinary man, but it did not stop him—it did not even slow him down. He knew he was too ignorant, but was trying to remedy that lack. As to being too old to study for the ministry, he remembered that Moses was eighty when he was ordained, and Frank was sure he could succeed before reaching that age! When they said he had no religion, he smilingly disagreed with them and said, with his quaint, penetrating humor, "I was there when I got it, and what I got then I have now." He admitted, however, he was not "overly pious," and that his ways were rough, like the woods he was raised in. "What I needed was education. They couldn't see my religion for my rough spots," he declared.

Frank Higgins faced a discouraging condition, yet undismayed he looked for a way out, knowing there always is a way. News came from Minnesota that preachers were needed in the new settlements, and Higgins saw his ray of hope. Since he could not write a convincing letter, he asked a friend to assist him; and the letter they wrote resulted in his going to the Annandale Methodist Church as a lay preacher.

When he left the Canadian home, his pastor said: "You are making a mistake, Frank. You

will make a good layman. You are not cut out for the ministry. You will soon be home again." Frank squared his shoulders and determined to make his friends false prophets and to prove himself a preacher.

At Annandale he labored for two years, handicapped by his lack of training but doing good work in spite of it. Finally, at the age of twenty-seven, he entered the preparatory department of Hamline University where, to use his own description, he became a "second year prep with two back studies." During these two years at Hamline, he supported himself by preaching in the near-by villages.

A story still current among the "old grads" of Hamline has to do with Frank Higgins' first day in that school. Somewhere Higgins got the idea that clothes were of paramount importance, and by careful economy he had secured a "top hat" and a Prince Albert coat. Clothed as he thought a preacher ought to be, he strolled about the campus, proud of his dearly-bought finery. The upper-classmen saw the new student, and the top hat was soon reduced to fragments. But this was not the end of a perfect day. Higgins caught the ringleader, joyously fell upon him as Samson upon the Philistines, and avenged the fate of the hat.

President Bridgeman heard of the fight and summoned Higgins to his office. Late in the day, after his last class, Frank appeared before the president.

“I sent for you this morning,” said Dr. Bridgeman, emphasizing the word “morning.”

“I came as soon as I got through my classes,” replied the student innocently, taking a seat and making himself comfortable.

“You have been fighting.”

“Yes. A fellow smashed my hat,” came the matter-of-fact answer.

A twinkle of merriment passed over the face of Dr. Bridgeman, but he suppressed it and began severely, “We cannot tolerate fighting on the campus——”

“But he smashed my hat!”

“It is against the rules and we cannot condone any acts of rowdyism. You must control your tendencies. Do you hear me? You must control yourself.”

“But the fellow smashed my hat, Doctor. He smashed my hat!”

Dr. Bridgeman took refuge in his handkerchief; the innocence of the new student was delightfully refreshing. But the dignity of the school had to be maintained, so he began again, hoping to make a better impression, “We shall have to discipline

you for fighting on the campus; it is forbidden, and you must bear in mind——”

“But my hat, Doctor! He smashed my hat!” Higgins was describing the destruction of his hat in gestures.

“Mr. Higgins,” said the president, and his tone carried a seriousness he was far from feeling, “the hat has nothing to do with the case. The rules say ‘no fighting’ and you have broken them.”

“But the fellow smashed my hat. What’s a fellow going to do when a fellow smashes his hat?”

“Fighting is the point, Mr. Higgins. Stick to the point.”

Higgins did; he repeated it. “He smashed my hat—a high silk hat!” His voice was tragic with grief. Dr. Bridgeman exploded; the defensive handkerchief could not cover his mirth.

“You may go. But remember—no fighting on the campus.”

“Tell them not to smash my hat,” said Higgins as he closed the door.

It was unnecessary for Dr. Bridgeman to protect Higgins’ hat by proclamation.

Higgins had been brought up in the Presbyterian Church. He reentered its service when he left Hamline University and went to Barnum,

Minnesota. There, as an unordained man, he ministered to the Presbyterian mission. Duluth Presbytery assigned him special studies as a candidate for the ministry, and the long grind for ordination began.



III

THE CALL TO THE CAMPS

IN the building of lumber towns, custom had decreed that art and morals be ignored. "Catch-as-catch-can" and "go-as-you-please" were the undefined rules of action. At a later day, there is much that posterity would prefer to forget, and posterity seldom presents the "illustrious first citizens" as proper examples for aspiring youth. Now Barnum, while not as bad as it might have been, was not so good as it should have been; it was better than some in the same environment, but Barnum began as a lumber town and that is sufficient description.

The life there gave Higgins a chance he could not disregard. It was a notable place in which to fight for righteousness. Higgins was of Irish blood; and it is said, perhaps with some element

of truth, that "if there is anything an Irishman loves more than a fight, it is two fights." Higgins entered the fray and gained in weight while fighting. He was not fighting for himself; that was not Higgins' way; he championed the fellows who knew not how to defend themselves.

Picking up the down-and-outs, bracing them up and encouraging them, was a part of his every-day work. They needed "brothering" and Higgins liked the job. Not long ago, an old friend of his, who knew him during these early Barnum days, related this story: An old settler had been kicked out of a saloon where he had become rum-soaked, filthy, and penniless. He needed a bath and Higgins generously applied it. He needed a friend and Higgins volunteered. The preacher sobered him, clothed him, and, among other necessities, gave him a pair of socks that his mother had knitted. The socks did the business; they warmed the settler's feet, and his heart too, and stirred his will to a new resolve. "God helping me," he said, "I'll never take those socks into a saloon." And he kept his vow. Whenever he went to town, he took the protecting socks from their sanctum, shod himself against temptation, and went into the presence of the grog-shops unafraid.

In all that north country, no welcome came to

the lumberjacks from clean men. The saloons were open to them, wide open; the gambling dens received them gladly and vice was cordial with smiles. But organized religion had nothing to offer,—no message, no greeting. The church had an evangel for the towns, but nothing for the woods. Men lived there by the thousands, but they were inaccessible; the task of reaching them was a toilsome and thankless one, and the devil was left in full swing.

Down in Higgins' heart a great restless longing was at work. It would not down. He hoped for a new day for the neglected men. He labored and prayed for a change wherein the church, with the help of the Man of Galilee, would show itself a brother to the woodsmen.

The government had thrown open large tracts of land to settlement, and, in visiting the camps, Higgins passed the cabins of the homesteaders. They were far from town and far from neighbors. They waged a constant fight against poverty, loneliness, and the forces of nature. Oftentimes they came to a bunk house service, that being their only opportunity to hear the gospel. Higgins visited their cabins, leaving a magazine, a prayer, and a word of cheer. He was their link to the outside world, their only representative of the church of Christ. On one occasion, being overtaken by a

blizzard, he found shelter in a homesteader's shack. The place was poor and clean. Poverty showed its empty hand. The family consisted of the father and two sons, the mother having died a few weeks before. Distance and an empty purse had forbidden the calling of a physician, and her casket was a rude box made by loving hands.

"If we could only have given her a Christian burial," said the husband, "we would feel better. She was a good woman, and a Christian, and we could not do even that for her." Higgins led them out to the white-mantled mound in the clearing and, standing by the snow-covered cross, he held the longed-for service. The tears that coursed the mourners' cheeks spoke of hope and immortality, for the pains of parting had been soothed with healing balm.

In the town and in the byways of the forest, Barnum's unordained preacher was a busy man. Higgins became enthusiastic in the new work and was often gone a week, speaking to a different group each night. Once, in his desire to reach other camps, he forgot that Sunday was near, and when the village congregation assembled, there was no minister.

"Didn't you have service?" asked Higgins when he returned.

"There was no one to lead us," they explained.

“Can’t professing Christians praise God unless they have a poor chap like me to direct them? There’s evidently not much danger of the world being evangelized from this point.”

All his experiences were leading him into his life work. He did not know it, but the choice was being made by movements with which God worked his miracles and his will. “I could not understand,” said he, years afterward, “why I should go to Barnum. Had I been permitted, I should have chosen a farming community rather than a logging village. There seemed no chance to advance; and I had an eye on big churches in those days. I appeared to be going on blindly and aimlessly. Now I look back and see a kindly Providence leading.”

Incidents and affections were calling him to a new ministry. The ties of the woods’ life were being woven around his heart. At the funeral of an unknown lumberjack who had met his death by a falling limb, the preacher was overcome by emotion. Out in the lonely forest, strangers were burying some “mother’s boy,” and no word of his passing was likely to reach her. These men had little in life, and the future held no joyful hope. “God helping me,” he prayed standing there by the solitary grave, “I will do something to brighten their days and put hope into their to-

morrow. If you can use Frank Higgins more, Lord, just show him how."

While at Barnum, Mr. Higgins married Miss Eva L. Lucas, of Rockford, Minnesota, and encouragement and effectiveness were added to the work in village and camps. The bride often accompanied him to the lumber camps where she presided at the little portable organ.

These were demanding days. The salary was small and the work was great—a condition too common in the mission fields. Higgins was trying to master the studies assigned him by the Presbytery; there were always new sermons to prepare, calls to make, and unexpected appeals to satisfy. But his physical strength was unlimited; he loved action and responded to the opportunities with a smile.

One night two campmen came to the manse with an urgent request.

"We want you quick," they said. "We've brought Will Lee from the camp to his homestead. He's asking for you. He's a mighty sick man. Can you come at once?"

Mr. Higgins hastened through the forest, accompanied by the messengers. The doctor met them at the door.

"If we could get Lee to St. Luke's Hospital in Duluth," said he, "there might be a chance for

him. There is no chance for him in this shack. What shall we do?"

"I'll get him through," replied Higgins, always ready in emergencies. They bundled the patient snugly into a sleigh and took him to the night train, the preacher accompanying him to the hospital.

But all their efforts were vain. After a careful examination the physician could give no hope. Lee was beyond the help of man, and Higgins gently told him of the coming end.

The lumberjack, untroubled, looked into the flooded eyes of the minister and with a smile said: "Thank God you came to the camp—that night. I heard you preach of the Savior. I wanted to know him. It was the first time in twenty years I had heard the gospel. . . . I was raised in a good home and that night the Christian teaching came back to me. . . . When the lanterns were put out and the bunk house was still, I got on my knees and prayed God to forgive me the past . . . and make me a better man. . . . Jesus Christ brought his strong salvation to me. I was forgiven."

He paused. Eternity was dawning.

"Mr. Higgins, go back to the camps . . . and tell the boys the story of Jesus Christ. . . . Go back and tell them the old story. . . . They need

it worse than the towns do. . . . Tell them that Jesus can make them live. . . . Go back to the camps."

Will Lee ceased to speak, his breath fluttered, and the spirit returned to the Giver.

The plea of the dying lumberjack rang in the preacher's ears; the desire was in his heart. But what of his long-cherished dreams of big churches and the comforts of home? To "go back to the camps" was to leave all this behind, to live a life of sacrifice in the forest. That night all Higgins' plans changed as he walked the hospital corridors. Rough men became his future hearers, the long, rambling camps his church, his parish was in the ways of the wilderness—for that night Frank Higgins consecrated himself to the service of God in the logging camps. The field of his future work was plainly indicated.

But Higgins knew that he was not yet ready to devote all his time to camp work. He viewed it, however, from a new angle. It was no longer an incident in his life, but the field for all his future action. With growing interest he studied the lumber industry and found it to be far more extensive than he had imagined. He was surprised to learn that it covered vast areas in many states. The needs of the men were everywhere the same; the church neglected them and the

vicious preyed on their weaknesses and fattened on their labor.

It was hopeless, this field of the woods; and what was one preacher among the hundreds of thousands who made the camps their home! But Higgins had given himself to it, and he would do his best. So he bent himself to the studies that the Presbytery had assigned him and prayed for the opening of the way.

Where could he get the money to finance the new work if he undertook it? He had nothing save the pittance he received for serving the Barnum church, and if he devoted all his time to the camps, the pittance would be cut off. The Mission Boards were not doing anything of this nature, and many of the ministers to whom he imparted his new ambition only smiled and said, "Stick to the regular work. No organization will ever put money into the changing camps where nothing permanent can be established." As if souls were of value only as they numerically strengthened the church!

But there was a way in, although Higgins had not suspected it. The dawn is messenger of day, and its first ray appeared during the following spring. He was surprised one day, on returning from the woods, to find his home crowded with lumberjacks. It was a motley, shamefaced, jest-

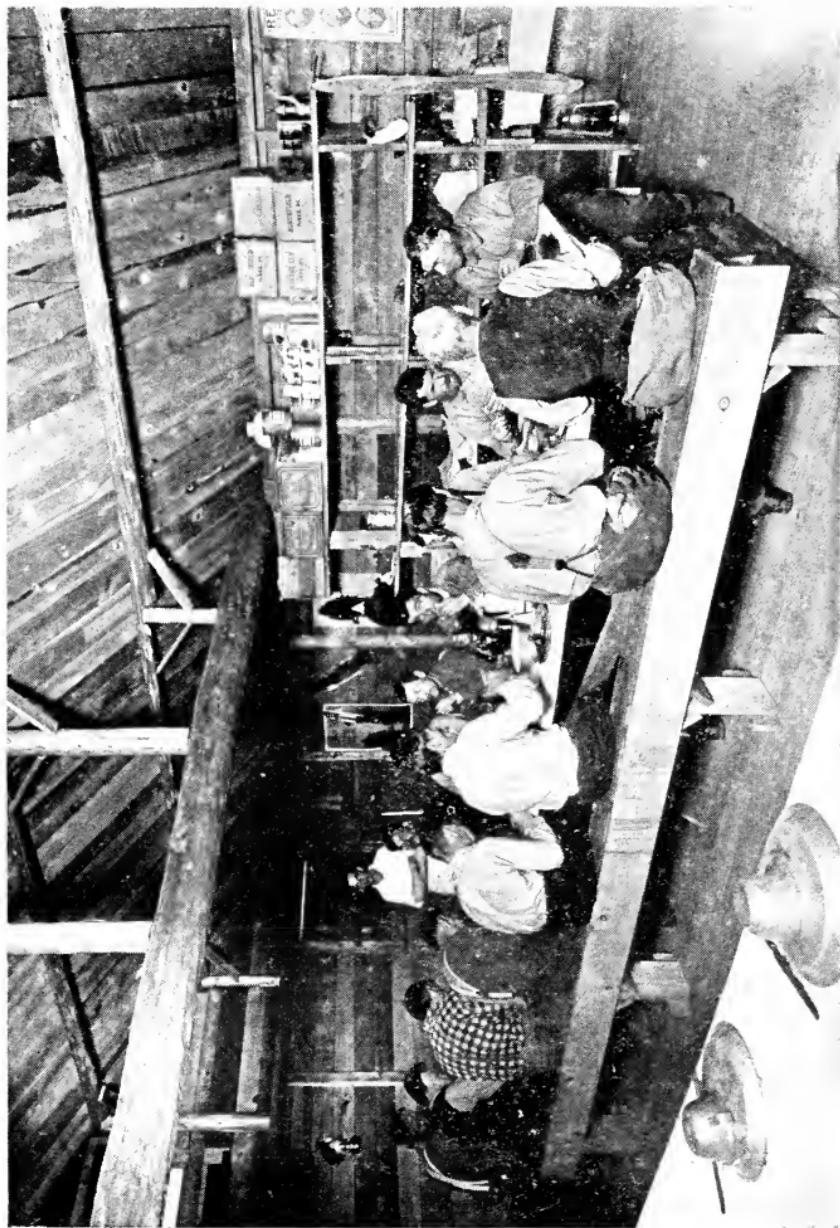
ing crowd, hiding its worthy intentions under the guise of mockery. But the spokesman finally began:

“Mr. Higgins, we’ve dropped in to tell you we’ve enjoyed your preachin’. The boys have elected me to make a spiel, but the saw is more in my line. You’ve treated us white; you’ve given us more advice than we’ve followed, and you’ve never asked to see the color of our money. This is no one-sided affair. We’re no cheap skates. We don’t want somethin’ for nothin’. So the boys have chipped in and here’s your stake for services rendered.”

Visibly embarrassed, he handed the preacher a check.

During the speech there had been a dead silence, for every man wanted to hear the remarks. Then, breaking into riotous cheers like bashful boys, they rushed out of the house to the safety of the street and the near-by saloons. Higgins was left with a check for fifty-one dollars in his hands and a new light was breaking on his mind—it was the light of the way in.

He had never asked assistance of the men. At first the campmen thought he was after “the dough.” “It’s another graft,” they said. But service after service passed with no collection, and slowly the realization dawned that he was work-



"THE HUNGRY MEN, AFTER HOURS IN THE CLEAN AIR, ARE TOO BUSY WITH FOOD TO WASTE TIME IN CONVERSATION" (page 59)

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ing for their good and for that alone. The gift showed their appreciation and proved that they would assist the enterprise.

Looking at the check, Higgins saw not the figures but the opening portals of the parish of the pines.



IV

LEARNING TO PLAY THE GAME

BEFORE Frank Higgins could devote his life to the camps, he needed a larger experience. He did not go to the theological seminaries to acquire this finishing touch; he moved to Bemidji, early in 1899, where he was taught by saloonmen, gamblers, grafters, and the rag-tag and bobtail of humanity. It was a school of experience—none other like it in the north; one such school was enough and too much. Higgins knew something of human depravity, but he was not versed in the merciless arts with which the money-mad spoilers fleeced their victims. Here that knowledge came in abundance; it could not be avoided or even dodged.

The Bemidji church was three years old and showed no sign of intelligence, health, or activity.

All it possessed was history, and it was too weak to tell its story. It existed in name only. There were but two members to help in the contest against evil, but they taught Higgins many lessons and aided his whole future. The evil forces of the village had driven out the former pastor because, they said, he had foolishly tried to introduce righteousness into the village. They also announced their intention to reproduce that stirring event in case another minister came to fill the vacancy. They were running the town; the presence of a preacher was embarrassing and they did not care to be embarrassed. A preacher had no place in their plans.

Frank Higgins arrived. The news of his advent went abroad and the underworld heard of it. A short time afterward, he was standing on the corner of the main street, when he was rudely accosted by a loudly dressed gambler.

“Who’re you?” demanded the intruder, who apparently knew without asking.

“I’m Higgins, the new minister of the Presbyterian Church.”

“Well, you won’t last long,” retorted the gambler with an insulting oath. “We drove out the other chap. You’ll have to go pretty double-quick, too.”

“Well, I guess it’s my play,” quietly announced

Higgins, "and here is where I give notice that I stay and call your bluff."

Higgins' closed fist followed his words. It landed very ungently on the diamond-studded shirt-bosom of the gambler, who responded to the impact by leaving the sidewalk and reclining on his back in the gutter, where he waved his feet in the air and frantically called for help. It was a gala day for the temperamental lumberjacks. This was "some preacher!" They congratulated him on his punch and laughed encouragement to the man in the mud.

The town marshal hurried into the crowd.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded of the preacher.

"Nothing the matter with me," replied the undisturbed Higgins. "There seems to be something the matter with that fellow down there. I'm all right."

The lumberjacks sanctioned what the preacher had done, so the marshal quickly decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and helped the gambler home, leaving Higgins to his admirers who were already enlarging on the punch of the preacher and stimulating the growth of a story that would lose nothing by repetition.

When the lawless element thought the matter over, they came to the conclusion that they had

made a mistake in driving out Higgins' predecessor. "*He* was only a preacher, but this fellow is a preacher with a mighty heavy fist—and the Lord only knows what he has up his sleeve!" Yes, they had made a mistake; there was no doubt about it.

Nature had done her best for Bemidji; man had done his worst. Lakes of crystal clearness bounded the little town, and the Father of Waters linked the lakes together and received the overflow. Green-crowned pines guarded and beautified the margins, and the blessing of clean air and golden sunshine contributed. The place was one

“Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.”

At that time Minnesota's logging interests centered in Bemidji. Thousands of lumberjacks worked in the neighboring camps. It was an ideal situation for the low, degraded tribe that had invaded the place with their saloons, gambling dens, and resorts. Law had not arrived; order was nowhere in sight. The greatest men there were those who best served themselves. Success in money-making, regardless of methods, secured the highest commendation. Moral ideas were topsy-turvy. To outsiders, Bemidji was badly in need of the church, but Bemidji was not conscious

of the need. Bemidji was sure of itself, and sufficient to the day was the evil thereof. Being young and lusty, boisterous and absolutely reckless, the place was not craving moral improvement. You could buy anything in the town but goodness or a blush. That day is past and gone forever. Bemidji now keeps step with moral progress and contributes to humanity's well-being.

Frank Higgins was sent there because such a man was badly needed. He had made good at Barnum where conditions were bad; it was hoped he would make good at Bemidji where conditions were far worse.

Prior to his coming, a church building had been erected and only partly finished. Bemidji at that time was enthusiastic about building anything but churches. Saloons were appreciated more. It patronized more than forty of them and left unfinished its only church.

Because he could not find a suitable home, Higgins moved his family into the unfinished church. Most of the houses at that time were tar-paper shacks and gave inadequate protection from the intense cold of winter.

The new minister was a citizen as well as a preacher. He got into the life of the whole town. There was need of a change of government and

he intended to hasten the day of its coming. In the pulpit and in the street he fought vice all the year. He was defeated time and again but never beaten. He fought with his back to the wall but never showed his back to the enemy. Everybody knew where Higgins was, how he stood, and what he was doing. And he enjoyed the fight, for was he not Irish? When he lost, he lost like a real sport, and the manner of his losing made him more friends than his arguments. He worked on cheerfully, in spite of seeming defeat.

“He never sours, he fights clean and open, and he smiles whether he wins or loses,” said one of the opposition. “That makes him friends on every hand. He’s the only reformer that I ever feel sorry to see beaten. It takes the fun out of our victory.”

Bemidji’s cardinal belief was,

“There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,”

and on that tide of booze the civic ship of state floated, with its cargo of kegs, bottles, roulette wheels, dice boxes, and red paint. The town dreaded a drought and therefore made a gala day whenever a new saloon was opened. To these grand openings, invitations were issued, and the new minister was not omitted. Bemidji, to say

the least, was entirely democratic! The town officials were the chief guests, speeches on Americanism mingled with free German beer, and the key to the new saloon was flung into the street, to symbolize contempt for state law, while the health of the new benefactor was freely guzzled. Those were great days! The brewers and the undertakers did a rushing business, and the horny-handed lumberjacks furnished the money that made the mare go.

Thousands of lumberjacks had to pass through Bemidji to enter or leave the camps, and the hard-working, hard-drinking woodsmen were the source of the town's prosperity. What they earned went into the tills of the saloons. If a jack was slow in "loosening up," the "knock-out drops" soon put him in a condition where he might be "rolled for his stake."¹ "Snake-rooms" were provided in the rear of the saloons where the helpless jacks could sober up. If a man died from the results of his spree, or the drops, it was easy to forget, and many were forgotten. Death is the lot of all men, and sooner or later it gets us all, anyway; this was their convenient philosophy. Many met death in the saloons, more were short-changed out of their earnings, and others were

¹ To be "rolled" was to be robbed while in a stupefied condition. A man's "stake" was his pay.

shamefully robbed, then kicked into the streets and told to earn more.

Men with appetites for liquor feared Bemidji in those days; nevertheless, they visited it and met the cleaning-out process they knew was in store for them. Temptation was strong, and well-intentioned fellows went down to Jericho and fell among thieves.

The good Samaritan, Higgins, was a busy man. The Jericho gentlemen worked on the job day and night to furnish bruised and penniless victims. The priest and the Levite continued their promenade on the other side. But great-hearted Higgins, poor of purse, with scarcely any salary, bound up the broken-hearted men, carried them on his back to the lodging-houses, and occasionally trundled them in a wheelbarrow to a place of safety. There he bathed them, put them to bed, and guaranteed the price. This was the Theological Seminary in which he prepared for the ministry. Here he studied humanity in the raw. He was unconsciously writing Church History, and for Hebrew and Greek he substituted the polyglot tongues of his parish,—a unique seminary course which led to the degree of “The Lumberjacks’ Sky Pilot.”

A man can’t do that sort of thing and keep it secret. It “just naturally runs over the edges”

and makes itself known. Men came to Higgins for protection against their weaknesses. They brought their money and placed it in his keeping. They asked him to accompany them past the places of temptation and see them safely on the train. He became a barrier against which the strong waves of temptation beat in vain. Many a mother thanked God for that unknown preacher, when her son returned sober and unspent after a winter in the woods.

During Frank Higgins' first year in Bemidji, the church building was completed. The next year a manse was erected and the family entered into its comfort. The out-station at Farley came into the building program during the third year and completed its church. Meanwhile, the Bemidji congregation had grown and needed larger equipment, so a new church came into being during the fourth year. This was an unusual record for an unordained man who was struggling alone with his books, hoping to obtain the coveted gift of ordination! How he found time to visit the lumber camps is more than we know, but three days every week were spent in the camps, and nine bunk house congregations received regular services. It was evident that the Sky Pilot had the gift of action and did not use brakes.

Marguerite Higgins was born during the early

residence in Bemidji. She learned the ways of the home quickly. She could hardly walk when she began her first search for her father among the lumberjacks in the corner saloons. Although a sharp watch was kept on her, she one day stole away to find her father and was not immediately missed. After a while they found her in a saloon, singing her baby hymns to an admiring audience of closely grouped lumberjacks. Her little tight-closed fists were full of silver that her adorers had presented; but the best, the golden tribute, was the silence of those hard men who stood uncovered in the presence of innocent childhood. It may have awakened memories of the past.

Among the many lumberjacks whom Frank Higgins had met in his camp visits was Will McDonald, a Highland Scotchman. The seed of truth had fallen into McDonald's heart, but there was no evidence of its sprouting. One morning, in response to a call, Higgins hastened to the hospital. There he found Will McDonald, bruised and broken, the victim of a fatal accident, his end near. The wild, rough life, with its many temptations, its far-flung wanderings from home and God, was nearing its end, and thoughts and aspirations, neglected until now, were demanding attention.

Higgins tried to cheer the passing moments, but

the woodsman, knowing that no earthly power could suffice to save his life, said:

“It’s no use, Frank, the jig is up. I’m nearing the landing with a heavy load. The road is steep. Do you think I’ll make the grade?”

McDonald was a four-horse teamster, but on the steep ascent of this last journey he was helpless. He unconsciously used the terms of his calling.

“Yes, Will, you can make the grade, but you’ll have to look for help.”

“You mean I’ll have to call for a team of leaders?”

“That is it,” said Higgins, “but thank God, McDonald, you have the greatest leader to give you a lift—the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Then the preacher read the story of the prodigal son, the promises to those who ask help, and that text of texts, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And in prayer he placed McDonald in the hands of God, with a plea for pardon and companionship.

A few hours later, Higgins was again at McDonald’s side. The screen was around the bed. When the minister took the teamster’s hand, a smile came upon the face of the dying.

"You're right, Frank," he whispered feebly. "Jesus Christ is a great leader. . . . I couldn't have made the grade without him. I needed him badly. But I'm goin' up easily. . . . We're goin' to make it, sure."

McDonald was sinking rapidly and Higgins bent closer to catch the feeble words.

"Tell the boys I've made the grade," he whispered, and with a smile he reached the Hilltop.

The days when Frank Higgins was to devote all his time to the campmen were not far away. The Presbytery had finally consented to ordain him. The Evangelistic Committee of the General Assembly had offered support, and the campmen were demanding more of his ministry.

Higgins then decided on a "post-graduate course" in the form of a "hobo trip" to the west. He knew the winter phases of Minnesota lumbering; he had seen countless great logs held fast by the ice, and he had seen them on their way down the river when spring had set them free; he was familiar with the winter work of the lumberjacks, but he had not experienced their summer program. So Higgins, dressed as a working-man, mounted a freight train and moved westward. He labored in the wheat-fields of North Dakota, worked as a scraperman on a new railway in Montana, the State of Washington entertained him in

a freight-yard where he unloaded lumber, and Oregon loaned him a pick and shovel and watched the dirt fly. Then, as a deck-hand, he traveled down the Columbia River to Portland where his trip ended. In all parts of the west he met representatives of the Minnesota camps. He lived with them in work and idleness, in rebuffs and bounty, in travel and lodging-house, by freight train and boat, highway and coach. Their life was his in all save willing wrong.

When, after two months, he returned to Bemidji, he brought with him a knowledge born of a varied experience. Now he was ready for the camps. For seven years he had carried on the work alone; now his denomination had promised support. He closed his Bemidji pastorate by announcing: "I belong to the lumberjacks. The fight of the men is mine. May God give me and the boys his help."



V

THE AX AT THE ROOT OF THE BIG TREES

NATURE makes the forest and man transforms it to his own uses; and the uses are as varied as man's imagination.

Of necessity, logging was the first task of the pioneer. When the cavaliers landed at Jamestown, they at once began their labors by wielding the ax. Food they had brought with them, but shelter they must have. The Pilgrim Fathers spent their days in felling trees and their evenings in sharpening their axes. The Dutch of New York, the Swedes of Delaware and the Quakers of Pennsylvania, all were axmen first and farmers afterward. To-day, the trails of the woodsmen have become the highways between cities.

For many years, little attention was given to

workers in the lumber industry, carried on in the heart of distant regions. It was a case of "out of sight, out of mind." The toiler, in the far-away pineries, seemed of little importance.

The details of lumbering are not lacking in interest. Into the distant pineries the worker hews his way, leaving behind him the broad "main-stem" of the logging-road. In Minnesota, where Higgins did most of his work, this "main-stem" is sprinkled with water which the zero cold transforms into a sheet of glistening ice, making a smooth road for the logging-sleds.

Log or frame structures house the workmen, and all around the buildings is a rude collection of shacks, providing dining-room, kitchen, office, storehouses, barns for the horses, and shops for the carpenter and blacksmith. In the heart of the forest a little village arises. The clearing increases as the cutting continues, and the logs are skidded into convenient piles, there to wait until the haul commences, which is after the roads are hardened by frost.

Huge loads are carried from the skidway to the landing, by means of four-horse sleds. As high as thirty-six thousand board feet, enough to build a good-sized house, have been drawn on a single load by four horses, but the majority of the loads are much smaller. The sled-runners are eight feet

apart and on these rest the sixteen-foot "bunks."¹ The logs are deposited on lake or river, if the transportation is to be by water, or at the railway, if more convenient.

In the highland logging operations of the far west, the hauling is done by powerful donkey-engines. A wire cable is attached to the log, and steam draws it to the engine. Another cable from a neighboring engine continues the operation until the log is at last placed upon the cars for its final journey to the mills. Owing to the large size of the trees, it would be impossible to handle them if it were not for the perfection of modern machines. Eastern logging mainly depends on horse-flesh, though the steam-hauler of the "caterpillar tractor" type is used in a few camps. The far west is now almost exclusively given over to logging by steam. So rapid has been the change that there are old-timers still working in the woods who remember the days of the ox team—the period before the advent of the horse.

In the old days, the bunk houses of Minnesota were fearful places, with neither comfort nor sanitation, and wholly unfit for the housing of men. Rough pole bunks, filled with hay, adorned two or three sides of the room. Springs and mattresses

¹ A bunk is a piece of timber placed across a sled to sustain a heavy weight.

had not yet arrived; the blankets seldom, if ever, made the acquaintance of soap and water. In the center of the room was a huge stove, and above it were racks for drying clothes. In the evening this rack was decorated by hundreds of socks which the men had worn during the day. The ventilation was inadequate, a trapdoor in the roof being the only provision for it. To the odor of drying socks, the smoke of a hundred pipes was added, creating a haze perceptible to the eye and more than perceptible to the nostrils.

A change for the better has taken place in recent years. More light, cleanliness, and ventilation have been introduced, and fewer men are housed under the same roof. There is, however, great need for further improvement, for the camps of the eastern states and the central west are still far behind the western camps, where housing has been carefully studied and better principles have been applied.

The cook-shacks deserve a brief description, and a word about the food will help to enlighten those who still speak of pork and beans as the chief delight of the woodsmen. The dining tables are a sea of oil-cloth on which floats a squadron of enamelware dishes, ranging from small gun-boats to overflowing supply-ships anchored in the center. A vast variety of foods, condiments, and

drinks provide for the keen appetites of the workmen. Everything is of the best, and there is an abundance of it. It is a land flowing with condensed milk and manufactured honey. This continent does not contain a better-fed class of workmen or a group of cooks more competent to appeal to the laboring man. The "No Talking" sign proclaims silence, but it is an unnecessary announcement; the hungry men, after hours in the clean air, are too busy with food to waste time in conversation. Only a low clang of table tools disturbs the quiet of the dining-room. Nevertheless, the absence of speech creates an uncanny silence, as the men ply the cutlery, with neither praise nor blame for the food.

Part of the office is devoted to the wannigan, where clothing, tobacco, patent medicines, and common necessities are sold. Here also the bosses, the clerk, and a few others make their home.

In the old days, when nearly all the men were American, the camps had a lingo of their own. A few of these descriptive words are still common to the woods. The superintendent of a logging company is known as "the walking boss," while the camp foreman is the "push," and his assistant is the "straw push." The clerk is an "ink splasher" or the "bloke that makes the stroke." Cooks are graciously spoken of as "bis-

cuit shooters" or "dough punchers," and when below par, as "stomach robbers." The cook's assistants are "flunkies" or "cookees," "pan-wrestlers," or "hashers." A carpenter became a "handyman" or "wood butcher." A "shanty boss" or "bull cook" is the bunk house janitor, and the workman who keeps the ice roads clear of refuse is the "road-monkey." The top-loader is a "sky hooker" and the visiting missionary becomes a "sky pilot."

The lumberjacks are really lovers of the woods and lovers of the camps. If you heard them curse the isolation and the hard conditions, you would not think so, but although other lines of labor invite them, they return to the forest, season after season, to repeat the tasks they have performed for years. From boyhood to old age, it is the only life they favor, and the logging camp is their only home. Without ties to kindred or location, they feel a companionship in the trees and rejoice in the keen edge of the ax. Having cast off relationships, they live purposeless lives and their wages go for selfish, hurtful pleasures.

The case of old man Bradley is typical. He had been forty-nine years in the woods and his age was sixty-five. But his frame was straight, his eye steady, his muscles elastic. It was difficult to keep pace with his long, swinging stride.

“So this is your forty-ninth winter in the woods?” he was asked by one who admired his splendid physique.

“My forty-ninth. I’m sixty-five years old; and I know logging from the stump as well as by steam-hauler.”

“What have you to show for all these years of hard work?”

With a smile he thrust his hands into his pockets and turned them inside out. “That’s my pile,” he said.

He held an old jackknife—with a broken blade!

“That’s all.” The smile faded. “An’ I’d have traded that for a drink of whisky many a time, only——”

He paused.

“Wall,” he presently continued, “my teeth are gettin’ poor an’ I need this knife to cut my tobacco.”

A living, such as it was, and a broken jackknife, for forty-nine years of labor!

“Who are the lumberjacks and where do they come from?” are questions often asked, as if this mass of men differed from the remainder of humanity. They are the sons of the farms and the sons of the cities. Every state in the union has contributed, and all the nations of Europe have sent their quota. In late years, the foreign ele-

ment has become prominent, and the English-speaking jacks are found in the far west rather than in the east.

One must not think of the lumberjacks as more ignorant than the people of the city. All classes and conditions of men are found in the woods, just as all types are seen on the city streets. One of the camp missionaries, at the close of a bunk house service, withdrew into a corner to read his Greek Testament. A woodsman seated near him watched him carefully, then reached for the book with the remark,

“I can read that.”

Loudly and proudly he began to pronounce the Greek, then to render the translation. The camp heard him and presently three others joined him. Each man in turn read and translated the text. Around that camp preacher were four college men who, in the fight of life, had been worsted and had sought the forest to hide their defeat and be forgotten. He is no fool who, after years of isolation, is able to read the easily-forgotten Greek. Wandering from camp to camp, working at common tasks, is a man who has been reduced to incompetency by drink. In his home city, a prominent firm still retains his name, and the city to which he added prestige does not know his whereabouts or his reduced condition. The camps are

hiding-places for those who have been overtaken by suspicion or who have committed crimes, sometimes against themselves, sometimes against others. There they remain, nameless and silent, working out their redemption or willing to be forgotten.

In conversation with a campman, a visitor became aware of certain familiar references. These led him to inquire the name of the woodsman, and the answer led to further inquiries. He was talking to a man who, a few years before, had been a millionaire. A sudden financial crash had reduced him almost to poverty, and then his name had been dropped from the public prints. He had gone to the forest and there had found himself and found his God; and there he lives to-day, a bright light in a dark place, happier than in the years of plenty when he lived for self alone.

The conglomerate of the woods is cosmopolitan. The best and worst are there—the drunk and sober, the rogue and upright, the infidel and Christian. Upon all of them is the mark of isolation, and the great need is the Christ of Calvary to give them rest.

Here is a curious incident of the North Woods. Higgins had one time been holding services in the Adirondack camps. A Scotchman approached and, with a whimsical expression, asked,

“What are you knocking around the camps for, and what is the idea of this preaching?”

Higgins explained that he was on a tour of investigation and intended to arrange for regular services. The Scotchman looked at Higgins in astonishment.

“Man,” he said, “I have passed all my life in the woods and this is the first sermon I have ever heard in a camp. Look!” he cried, at the same time pointing to the blackened stumps that marred the mountainsides. “In all these years that they have been logging, thousands of men have gone to hell while they did it, and the church never cared. I’m glad it’s waking up at last.”



VI

STRUGGLES AGAINST INDIFFERENCE AND OPPOSITION

IF Frank Higgins had not been a big-fisted, determined man, insulated against discouragement, it is very probable that the logging camp mission would have died in his day. This vision of Higgins was accepted as a mirage of sunshine and sand; it was the dream of an impractical, uncultured fanatic. But to-day the camp preachers have passed into the list of gospel necessities.

Higgins' idea of going into the forest by-paths was very new, because many had forgotten a very old injunction which reads, "Go ye into the highways and byways and compel them to come in." So when the Presbytery heard that its minister at Bemidji devoted much of his time to the inland camps, it looked with suspicion on the man and

his venture. Some of the ministers told Higgins plainly and bluntly that he was wasting valuable time and discrediting himself with the church. Others, very sure that they were right and equally sure that he was wrong, said that his duty was to the little mission church, and that his soap-box oratory in the bunk houses would not be tolerated. It was a pretty kettle of fish for a minister to wander through the woods, when he should have been sheep-herding in the village, and the sooner he got down to the real business of the Kingdom, the better it would be for all concerned! It did not look good for Higgins or the camps.

You see, Higgins' wayside ministry had a freakish cast. Consequently, it received little encouragement. But of rebuffs he had many and to spare. He was advised to stick to the organized church and quit gallivanting in the woods. There was no promise of permanency, no possibility of support, so they said, and if the lumberjacks wanted the church, they knew where the churches were located. Everybody liked Higgins, though many thought him a fool with a will-o'-the-wisp for a guide. So they tolerated or ignored him—and he continued to smile and to preach in the camps.

The camps were all the time demanding more attention, and he desired to give them more. He

alone could not supply the many clamorous calls; others must share the task; but for a long time no hand was extended helpfully, and he continued to labor alone.

Higgins could hardly be called rich; his only income was his salary. When he first went to Bemidji, he was promised only three hundred and fifty dollars a year. Yet with this scanty backing, he borrowed money to pay the salary of the Rev. Ebenezer Ferry, who became first assistant in the camps. Later, when Higgins told the story to the lumberjacks, those big-hearted woodsmen contributed to the cause, and the borrowed money was repaid. Frank Higgins carried heavy burdens in the early days, burdens of indifference from the church and burdens of debt; but heavier than all was the feeling that here was a wide field of uncared-for men whose souls were hungry and for whom there was no food. At times it looked as if he must take the advice of opponents and stick to organized channels. But the memory of the eager faces in the gloom of the bunk houses forced all discouragement aside, and, with fresh determination, he faced the task again.

Churchmen were not the only skeptics as to the value of his work, for many of the lumber companies also looked askance on the new effort. The officials, knowing the type of men to whom Higgins

preached, knowing their prodigal lives and their willing sinfulness, felt that the mission could not be successful. They said as much to him and said it emphatically, calling him certain names too sturdy for printer's ink. If Higgins had not loved the lumberjacks, these oft-repeated opinions would have discouraged him.

Here and there a logging company would not allow him to preach in their camps because they feared labor agitation, believing that public meetings would be injurious to the whole industry. The spirit of unrest has always been noticeable in camps where the workers are unattached to family or place; and a little spark might kindle dangerous dissatisfaction among the lumberjacks. To such as held this view, it seemed best to keep the doors closed, even to the presentation of the gospel.

The employers who forgot humanity or brotherhood in the worship of wealth, men whose methods would not stand inspection, and whose ways were more successful if separate from publicity, did not care to have a preacher of righteousness in their camps, for with half an eye he would be able to find the ulcer spots that increased human misery and their own profits.

The gambling foremen who spent their evenings in fleecing the workmen, by greater skill in the

game and less honesty of play, were among those who opposed the entrance of any advocate of the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount as a basis of man's dealing with man. They gave no reason for their refusals, and to those who knew their lives, no reason was necessary.

There were wheels within wheels. Honest convictions and vicious motives both militated against the mission work, but sometimes the unexpected happened, and friends came from unexpected quarters. Armed with a letter of introduction from the camp proprietor, who looked with favor on the work, Frank Higgins once went to a camp near Kelliher, Minnesota. He inquired for the foreman, in order to present his credentials. Meanwhile, the foreman heard of Higgins' presence and started out to find the visitor, with the intention of speeding his departure. When the two met, the Irish foreman, whom we will call Mr. Grady, bristled:

“Are you Higgins?”

“I am. Is this Mr. ——”

“Yes, I’m Grady. What the rip-snorting do you want?”

“I have a letter of introduction from the proprietor,” said the missionary, at the same time producing the letter.

“I don’t give a whoop who you have a letter

from," burst out the foreman with an oath. "You can't preach in this camp. Get your things out of here withering quick and warm the trail. I won't have any blathering preachers among my men."

Higgins looked at the profane babbler and quietly answered, "I am in no haste about leaving. This camp has an added interest to me since I met you."

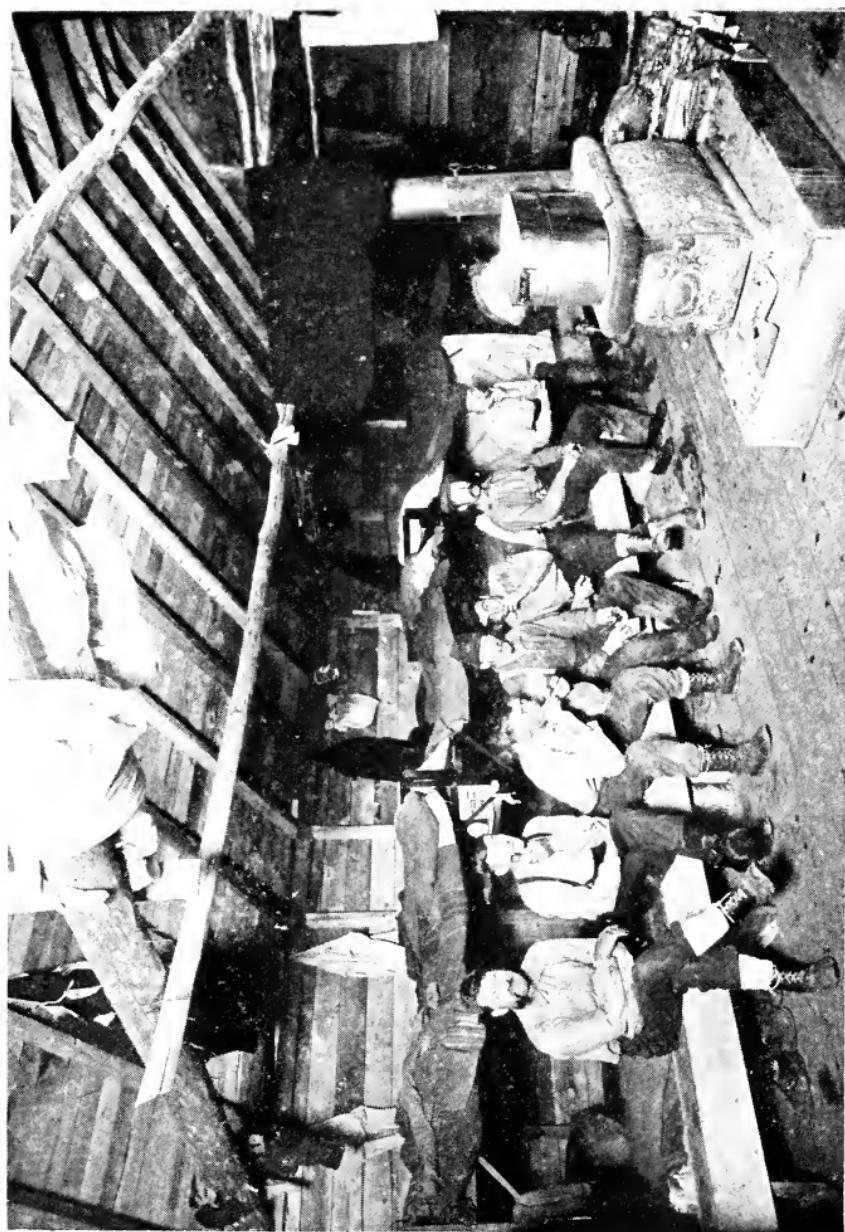
"Get out, or I'll throw you to blazes out of here!"

"Not so hasty, Mr. Grady. Is your hospital ticket good? You might get hurt, for I'll be present during the disturbance."

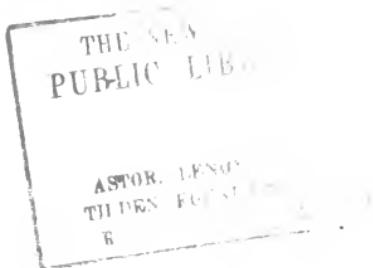
It would have taken a strong man to throw Higgins out of the camp, as those who tried it found.

The preacher felt a desire to teach the foreman a little lesson in courtesy. But another consideration came to his mind. If he should administer the lesson, the affair would become known and the lumberjacks, who were the missionary's friends, would refuse to work, so the kindness of the proprietor would be repaid with loss.

After Higgins left the camp, Mr. Grady met with a quick trial and conviction. The foreman's remarks had been overheard; and when he entered the blacksmith shop, the smith suddenly dragged him over the anvil and kicked him out of the place.



"IN THE OLD DAYS, THE BUNK HOUSES OF MINNESOTA WERE FEARFUL PLACES, WITH NEITHER COMFORT NOR SANITATION" (page 57)



When Grady picked himself out of the snow, the blacksmith added another kick and with it the remark,

“There’s an extra one for the way you treated the Sky Pilot yesterday. I’ll teach you to respect the clergy!”

And a number of men left the camp, refusing to work for “a push who ain’t got no decency.”

There were tempests in many teapots. Encouragements and rejections walked side by side; beckoning hands and clenched fists were always in sight. For a long time, opposition was more evident than approval. But to Higgins it was the expected, a part of the day’s work. Of course there were thorns, but the roses were fragrant and beautiful, and he stuck to the work he had chosen.

Among the lumberjacks, the mission caused a division of minds. Religion was considered a town institution. The Ten Commandments belonged to civilization, and to have them introduced in the woods infringed on personal liberty. The jacks had never bothered the church—why should the church intrude on them? Higgins was reminding them of sin and duty and God, and Higgins was disturbing their peace. As usual, Ahab blamed Elijah for the riot of conscience.

To some of the men, the object of Higgins’ preaching was plain. Why, they argued, should

a man spend his time in preaching to them if no increase came to his church through added recruits? So the more bigoted of his hearers decided to block the movement by disturbances; and, as they planned, they promised themselves a merry time and for Higgins an active one. However, when they "started something," it was sure to be Higgins who finished it. His was a ready wit and a strong arm, and he never hesitated to use both when wrong needed a setback. In fact, he thrived on opposition and did his best work under it.

A top-loader, influenced by liquor and his early training, one night so profanely expressed himself that the service became a turmoil.

"This is our *church*, boys, the *only church* we have," said Higgins to the men, and his voice was kindly and sad.

While the men sang, the preacher tried to silence the aggressor but with no success. Evidently the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," could here be applied. "Absent treatment" had not been effective, so Higgins demonstrated. With a rush he was on the disturber. Out through the door he projected him, and a moment later the man lay half buried in a snowdrift.

The surprised top-loader brushed the snow from

his face and looked with sober astonishment at the muscular preacher, then drawled,

“Say, Mr. Higgins, what church do you belong to?”

“*This church.*” He pointed to the door of the bunk house. “If you want to worship with us, come on in and behave yourself.”

The woodsman has been, and still is, the victim of trickery. He has willingly, but unwittingly, contributed to the profits of the sharper; he has fattened the purse of the pretended cripple; he has relieved the imagined distresses of a myriad petitioners. Because he has a big heart, he is an easy victim, and visiting strangers usually carry loaded dice. So, when Frank Higgins came to preach, it was considered another kind of swindle by which to fleece the wandering sheep of the forest.

But Higgins asked no collection, suggested no gain for himself, told no pitiful story of his own distress or the poverty of a cause. He interested himself only in his listeners, their needs, their sins, their neglect of duty and Christ. And the outcome was amazing. It was more than that, it was confusing, for it unsettled all their preconceived ideas. They thought him a sheep-shearer, but no clippers appeared. Consequently, in a camp where he had not preached before, several

of the men followed him after the service and slangily invited him to "show his hand."

"We want you to put us next," said the spokesman.

"Next to what?"

"Oh, come across! What's the game? You ain't preachin' for nothin' an' you didn't ask for a hand-out. Let us in on it."

And Higgins explained how, long ago, the Master commanded his disciples to go into the highways and byways with the good news of the Kingdom; and how he, as one of the Master's followers, was trying to obey.

It was difficult to believe. It looked too divine for this selfish day, but Higgins had "a way with him"—the convincing way of a man who carries his heart in his hand.

In 1902 the Evangelistic Committee of the Presbyterian Church guaranteed Mr. Higgins' salary and commissioned him to preach in the camps under their direction. This was the first recognition that came to him from his church, and the heart of the lonely preacher leaped with encouragement. But still there were doubters in the ministry, and these doubters were not silent.

The Synod of Minnesota met in the fall of 1905; and some of the members, who had been aware of this modern voice in the wilderness, felt that if

Higgins could be induced to present the story of his work to the Synod, it would sweep away the last barriers of opposition. When it was suggested to him, his face brightened with encouragement, but as he thought of his lack of skill as a speaker, a cloud of sadness settled upon it. "I can talk to lumberjacks," he said, "but I can't speak to ministers. My grammar is bad and I know it. I've had little schooling, and when they hear me, they will think less of the work than before. Don't ask me, boys, I'm afraid. I would do the work harm, and God knows I can't afford to do that."

Those who heard Frank Higgins in his later years, when the roughness had been worn away and his speech improved, will hardly appreciate his hesitation in addressing the Synod, for time made Frank Higgins the master of his audiences. But at last, after repeated urging, and with a trembling foreign to his big, manly frame, he consented to tell his story.

It was a story of work accomplished, for he limited himself to experiences. Spiced with the breath of the big woods came the narrative, descriptive of his lumberjacks, their virile vices, their loneliness, the silent longings, the false delights, the simple pleasures of grown men who remained boys and retained the wishes of boyhood, pathetic

humor mixed with tragic, and the hidden divinity showing forth in brute men. As he warmed to his theme, simple pictures of strength and weakness crowded into the speech—of prodigals returned to the Father, of Magdalenes who touched the garments of the clean Christ, of lonely hearts that leaped into laughter on the tote-road, of leprous men who found new hope in life.

His hearers saw a new day dawn in the far-flung pineries. Men who before had been silent or lukewarm saw a service, perhaps not according to established methods, but effective in winning men. Here was a new field for the old, old story; here, also, was a new worker with a real love for the lonely and forgotten, and his leader was the Christ of Calvary. And then the ministry gave him its hand.



VII

WHITE WEATHER AND WINTER WOODS

IT was the story of Higgins and his dog-team that first called the attention of many persons to the missionary's unique work. Down from the north woods had drifted the rumor of a minister who used a dog-team in his visits to the camps.

In northern Minnesota, twenty-five years ago, forest roads were few or absent. Rails were not yet laid. The trails followed the wayward outlines of the hills or clung to the borders of wilful streams. What more natural than a dog-team? The narrow pathways offered a highway and Higgins early adopted the idea.

For three years he had supplied the lumberjacks with old magazines, carrying them by pack-sack. But the trails were rough and long and

the weight on his back was wearying. Finally, he secured a handsome pair of St. Bernard dogs, harnessed them to a sled, and used them in the task of forest evangelism.

The idea was practical; the dogs furnished a ready means of transportation, with no expense for stabling and little for food. If a railroad trip were necessary, the dogs could travel in the baggage-car and be ready for the drive to inland camps. At the end of thirty or forty miles over the winding trails, the team appeared none the worse for the exertion.

Barriers of prejudice were broken by the dogs themselves, whose beauty appealed to the animal-loving lumberjacks; for Flash and Spark caught and held the affection of the men. On coming to a bunk house whose door was secured by a sliding latch, Higgins would drive right in, and while the men crowded around the team, he could explain his business and announce the time of his meeting. The dogs were protectors as well as workers, and many jacks who might have opposed the missionary thought it best to be silent.

All the north is white and cold in winter, and to journey through the unmarked forest is not easy. No sign-posts point the way; the "traffic cop" can not be consulted when doubt arises; travelers are seldom met, and the trails are easily

blotted out by wind and snow. One time, on a trip to International Falls, Higgins lost his way. The trail disappeared as if by magic. Night was approaching and he had not seen a human habitation for hours. It was to be a night under the stars. With his dogs he had traveled far that day, and the last food had been eaten at the early breakfast.

Close to a large pine stump the missionary built a fire, gathered wood for the night, and over the embers cooked a rabbit he had shot that morning. Fragrant pine boughs made a comfortable mattress, the robes from the sled kept off the ten-below-zero wind, and soon the crowding dogs and their master slept under the veiling pines through which the cold, far stars peeped at the benighted travelers. The fire died down while they slept, and the timber wolves, scenting prey, boldly drew their circle near. The howling beasts and snarling dogs brought Higgins out of his dreams. Beyond the dull glow of the wood, the eyes of the wolves dotted the curtained night. The missionary hastily replenished the dying fire. As it leaped into flame, the wolves lost their boldness and retreated, the dogs ceased their snarling, and soon the silence was unbroken, save for the popping balsam as it emitted protests in the consuming flame. For the remainder of the night Higgins

kept watch, having no desire for a return of the wolves, and with the first peep of dawn he was up and away. A blazed trail, which he fortunately found, led him to the village of Little Forks, where he conducted the first religious services ever held in that place.

In those long trips through the unbroken forest, Higgins often took his life in his hands. On several occasions he was reported to have perished in the wide sweeps of unbroken snow. Indeed, many experienced woodsmen have paid toll to the blinding whiteness, and not until spring, if ever, have their bodies been found.

With great gusto Frank Higgins often told this story of a lost trail and its sequel. To save time, he had taken a short cut from one camp to another. All went well for a while, when the wind increased in power, bringing the snow-clouds with it. Soon the whirling fury of a maddened blizzard was about him. All sense of direction faded. The dog-team looked to him for guidance, but he could give them no help at all. Left to their own will, they wandered about until at last their progress ended in the deep snow of a muskeg, or marsh. Here Higgins made a temporary camp and spent most of the day. The storm lessened before nightfall, and by rare good fortune he found a trail which led to a village. There he put

the dogs in the hotel barn and went in to supper. When he returned with food, the dogs refused to eat, not even smelling at the dainties he had collected. They had been hard pressed in the deep snow of the swamp, and he feared they had been over-driven. He loved these splendid helpers, these loving companions of the lonely paths. Perhaps the strain had been too much. He reproached himself for carelessness, and there were tears in his eyes as he petted their silky coats. Again he visited them before retiring and again they refused food. They were even indifferent to his caresses. With a heavy heart Higgins went to bed and his troubled sleep brought him disquieting dreams that returned again and again through the long night.

He arose early and went to the barn, hoping for the best but fearing the worst. On his way thither he met the hotel proprietor, his face red with anger and his temper aflame. Seeing Higgins, he burst into profanity;

“Are them mangy, measly dogs yours?”

“They are,” replied Higgins, feeling like a sentenced person. He was sure the man’s anger was due to the death of the over-driven dogs.

“Then pay for the pork the rip-roaring brutes chewed up while you were at supper last night. Them hungry cannibals stole half a hog and ate

it. Now I ain't got nothing but eggs and salt-horse to give the boarders to-day."

A roar of hearty laughter broke out—the joyous laughter of relief. It was Higgins' "capacity laugh" and his eyes twinkled in their moisture of gladness.

The hotel keeper looked at the preacher in amazement. Men usually protested or refused when asked to part with money, but here was one who enjoyed the demand!

"I'll pay gladly, old man, mighty gladly. Half a hog, you say? No wonder they didn't eat! They simply couldn't! What's the bill, and don't be afraid to charge!"

"It was the only time I was ever asked to pay their board," commented Higgins later. "The dogs were entitled to a feast after their struggle in the blizzard, and my relief in finding them safe was worth the price."

Minnesota has ten thousand lakes, and, under the constant cold of winter, each icy surface becomes a splendid highway. "Three-foot ice" is not uncommon; teams are driven across the lakes; and the long journey around the meandering shore is shortened by a direct path. But when the unobstructed north wind faces the traveler, it takes its toll by the discomfort which increases with each moment. Higgins once attempted the short cut

across a lake, at each step fighting the fierce wind from the north. Had he not been a strong man, he would never have reached the sawmill on the other shore. When he entered the mill, he collapsed and instantly fell asleep. The engineer saw him fall and, realizing his condition, dashed a pail of cold water over the sleeping man—heroic but necessary treatment. If Higgins had been allowed to sleep, it would have been the sleep of death.

In January, 1906, while Higgins was crossing Red Lake, he was overtaken by a storm. A blizzard in the forest is bad enough, but on the open lake its fury is intensified a hundredfold. Down the twenty miles of ice swept the snow—a choking, freezing mass. Shore lines faded away and he was at the mercy of the storm. Night came on, adding loneliness to the pitiless snowstorm, but it could not increase the victim's helplessness.

Human assistance was impossible but the help of God was near. He prayed for strength and strength was given him. Long after nightfall Higgins reached the shore. There was no human habitation in sight, and helplessly he wandered on through the forest until at last, near the hour of midnight, a light fell upon his tired eyes, and a moment later he was pounding on the door of an Indian cabin where he received a warm welcome

from a Chippewa family. They gave him every comfort they possessed, and when they learned that he was a minister, the old squaw took a Bible down from the shelf, placed it upon his knees, and bade him lead the family in worship. Twenty years before, an Episcopalian minister, Dr. Joseph A. Gilfillan, whose tireless work among the Chippewas is well remembered, had given her the Bible.

On another occasion, in company with a camp missionary, he was crossing a frozen lake, when he stepped into an air-hole; and had it not been for the ready assistance of his companion, he would have lost his life. Because of the cold, his dripping garments were soon a mass of ice, and with great difficulty he reached the shelter of the village. Fortunately, there were no ill effects from the exposure, and as soon as his clothing dried he continued his journey.

When the camp mission threw off its swaddling bands, and Higgins became the director of other missionaries, the dog-team no longer fitted into the plan. Each new missionary was given a line of camps, and superintending the work took Higgins into all parts of the lumber district. There were new lines to explore, difficulties to adjust, and far separated places to visit. Again the pack-sack became a part of his equipment.

Early one Sunday morning Higgins left the camp where he had held service the night before. As he passed out of the clearing, a lumberjack hailed him.

"Thought I'd walk along, Pilot, for company's sake."

"Glad to have you, John. How goes it?"

"Fine, mighty fine! Haven't tasted a drop this winter. Hand over your pack. I'm out for exercise. About fifty pounds," continued John as he adjusted the straps to his shoulders.

"Just about," replied the minister. "Hymn-books, Testaments, and a few necessities."

The tote-road glistened with whiteness, the crunching snow made music to the swinging strides, and in silence they placed the miles behind them.

"Let me take the 'turkey'¹ a while," said Higgins. "You've carried it half-way."

"See here, Pilot," protested the lumberjack, "I'll land this pack in Camp 3. You handed me a big lift when I was down-and-out. This is the first chance I've had to do a bit for you. God knows you did a heap for me."

Memory recalled a scene of the year before. In a "snake-room" he had found this man nearly dying from "knock-out drops." There the saloon-

¹ The name given by lumberjacks to a packsack.

men had flung him after robbing him. He was filthy, drunk, and friendless. Higgins had "brothered" him, watched over him in the intervening months, and finally had led him to the Savior. To-day he was clean, wholesome, companionable, and in the spirit of gratitude he carried the missionary's pack to Camp 3, twelve miles away. What though some days were dark and dreary, the winding trails filled with the powdered snow, the journeys hard, and the cheerless camps far apart? With such results how could Higgins be cast down? Paradise, with its fruit and fragrance, nestled between the snowy hills of northern Minnesota.

God gave Frank Higgins a strong body and he used it for the Giver. To Higgins, it was a stewardship to be placed in the market for the glory of the King. One day the missionary met a man named Louis. Both were bound for Camp 5. Louis had been enlivening the village with his presence and money. His money now reposed, well cared for, in the cash-register of the saloon, but Louis had been thrown out, as men cast off a worn garment. He reeked with liquor and his wavering legs prophesied an early collapse. If Louis were to make the far-off camp, Higgins must help him, and to that end he gave his arm in support. Not long did that suffice, for Louis'



"NATURE MAKES THE FOREST AND MAN TRANSFORMS IT TO HIS
OWN USES" (page 55)

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overburdened legs grew more unstable and finally dropped him, crumpled and unconscious, in the snow. The village was miles behind, the camp miles ahead, the night shadows were deepening, and in the frozen forest death awaited the lumberjack if his companion should fail him. So Higgins bent to the task before him and carried the unconscious man to camp, arriving there bone-weary, almost at the breaking point. But he had saved a life.

Higgins held a short service that night, for he was too tired to speak as usual. In the meantime Louis, surly with liquor, ruffled the temper of the cook, who promptly reduced the drunken fellow to a bruised state of enforced peace. Higgins heard of the row, found his charge, ministered to his battered body, and spent a large part of the night in relieving the man's agony.

Louis and the minister did not meet again until the spring, when the men went "down river" at the break-up of the camps. There Higgins met the man he had saved from freezing. Louis was drunk, very drunk; filthy, very filthy; and very poor; for not a cent remained from his long winter's labor. He was mired in body, soul, and purse. The river flowed near-by, and Higgins dragged the wretched man into its cleansing waters. He soused him as women rinse clothes,

dipping him time and again until, clean and sober, Louis emerged a sadder and whiter man.

While his clothes dried, Louis did some thinking, the nature of his thought being disclosed in a remark he made to his benefactor.

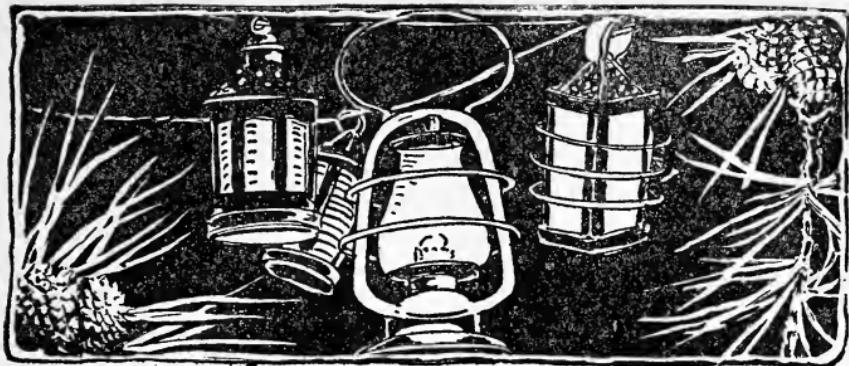
“You’re white pine without a knot. You treat me like a brother.”

“That’s our relation, Louis, we *are* brothers.”

“I’m a low-down, dirty bum an’ you’re white to me. Tell me, Mr. Higgins, why you’re a friend to the likes o’ me?”

“For Christ’s sake, Louis, for his sake.”

It was not pious cant that Higgins expressed, but the spirit of constraining love which linked him to humanity for whom Christ died, a love that compelled him to undergo the dangers and labors of the white weather and winter woods.



VIII

PREACHING IN THE PINERIES

FRANK HIGGINS looked the part he played, the part of a big brother, but nothing about him suggested his profession. No distinguishing garments suggested any difference between him and his forest parishioners. On the trail he looked like a camp foreman or a company official. He mixed with the men, jollied them, crossed wits with them, sympathized and fraternized. Father, mother, and politician blended in his nature.

Frankness and a twinkle looked out of his blue-gray eyes; even when aroused, the sign of mirth lingered. His ruddy face, like a bronzed new moon, told its own story of the out-of-door life. His two hundred pounds had been rounded into muscle by long tramps and heavy packs, giving

his five feet nine inches a thick-set, sturdy appearance that satisfied. The jaw was resolute. The big hand shook yours in hearty friendship. He looked the man he was. Meeting him for the first time, you felt that you had known him always—you welcomed an old-time friend rather than made an acquaintance, a friend with whom you felt no reticence. Men who usually avoided strangers forgot themselves with Frank Higgins. Gamblers, saloonmen, and their kind ordinarily give the clergy a wide berth, but, seeing Higgins approaching, they met him with a ready hand and familiarly slapped him on the back while they chatted with him. Reticent lumberjacks considered him a member of the family from whom they could borrow a quarter and with whom they dared be natural. For Frank Higgins was as approachable as a candidate before election.

His preaching did not contradict his appearance. It was simple, without adornment, straightforward and direct. He struck hard; it was his nature; he was born that way and so he remained to the end—a hard-hitting, open fighter in politics and pulpit. I mention politics because evil was entrenched behind the ballot, and Higgins fought it in the pulpit and at the polls.

Most of the camp services were held after supper in the bunk houses where the men slept and

spent their hours of leisure. A barrel or box became a pulpit, and the drape of a horse blanket gave it dignity. In the uncertain light, double-tiered bunks gave the appearance of a ground floor and a gallery, and from them scores of legs, encased in woolen socks, dangled like Christmas stockings from a fireplace. The "deacons' seat"—around the front of the bunks—was filled with campmen smoking, laughing, retailing the incidents of the day. Suspended lanterns created a mist of shadows and dim circles of light, while the centrally located stove radiated its heat and roarings. The drying socks on the rack above did not add to the attractiveness of the place.

Not much of a church was this! No stately organ, vested choir, fashionable audience, and solemn order awaited the speaker who, coatless, stood behind the barrel-pulpit and announced,

"Turn to No. 31 and hit it up while the going's good. Are you ready? Everybody sing!"

"Alas! and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sovereign die!"

Such singing! They sang as men sing in their own homes. The lusty voices crashed forth the song or rendered it musically, according to individual ability. It was loud and strong, free and spirited, and here and there a trained voice freed

itself from the medley and revealed the gentler breeding of the owner.

"You can do better on the next verse," encouraged Higgins. "Jim didn't sing a note. Wake up, old man!" Jim claimed exemption because of a cold and was admonished to whistle the air.

Scripture and prayer followed, then another hymn, and then the sermon for which all were ready and waiting. Higgins never disappointed; he always had a message. His material would not always stand analysis as to outline and development, but it met the needs of his audiences. Sin received no tender touches, no courtesies of speech robbed it of its vileness. It was painted black. Higgins described the vices of men in plain, colloquial, stinging English that cut to the nerve and left the mind quivering with a sense of guilt and shame. The illustrations he used were not culled from books of sermon anecdotes; he found them in the "snake-rooms" of the near-by towns, in the experiences of his hearers, in their pockets, their hearts, their hands. Higgins was more sure of the sins of the present day than of the misdeeds of Israel. The transgressions he described were those of living men.

His sermon on the Prodigal Son will long be remembered in the camps. It brought that compelling parable down to date. To his hearers, the

prodigal was not a Jew, but an American lumberjack, out for a good time with booze and color. The far country became the adjacent village with its advertised evils. The waste and riot, the hogs and husks, were their own experiences; and the waiting Father, with hands extended in forgiveness, was almost visibly present. As one of the men remarked, "Higgins gave them the straight gospel and made them take it."

The message of the Sky Pilot had no class distinctions. It was against sin everywhere, its remedy was applicable to all. One night, while he was arranging for a bunk house service, the camp proprietor entered and seated himself on the barrel which Higgins had intended to use for a pulpit. Standing beside the owner, the minister opened the meeting. The sermon was pointed, and the man on the barrel enjoyed the forceful home thrusts. At each telling sentence, he nodded approval and shouted words of encouragement:

"Keep the chips flying, Pilot! Give them another whirl! You've got them where the shoe pinches, good and tight!"

Here was a plain-speaking, fearless fellow, and the proprietor found him refreshing and entertaining—a fellow who knew the lumberjacks and their vices, and exposed all in true colors. A splendid chap!

He who applauds the exposure of another's weakness should have no private vices to uncover. But unfortunately the camp owner was open to criticism, being himself a wasting prodigal. While he was one of the best loggers in the state, yet his low morals caused much comment, and his son was following in the devious footsteps of his father.

After the proprietor had committed himself to Higgins' method of dealing with lumberjacks, and had given his hearty commendation, Higgins turned his full batteries on camp owners, contractors, and foremen, for the sordid, selfish, and immoral examples some of them were setting for the men.

"I do not wonder that you lumberjacks live shameless lives, for the leaders of the industry set you the worst of examples. Some of them are found drinking, gambling, and carousing in the villages and towns; and the men who should lead you into better things are only examples of riot and immorality."

The proprietor was astounded at the sudden turn of affairs, and for a moment he was silent. But silence was no security.

"Why don't you applaud that sentiment also?" asked the preacher. "It's just as true as the others."

In the office, after the service, the owner turned to Higgins and expressed himself as follows:

“That was pretty crudely plain, Pilot.”

“I always preach so the audience will understand me.”

“But you needn’t have shouted the thing before the whole crowd.”

“Mr. Bank, I didn’t tell them a thing but what they already knew. You have been advertising your own life. The boys know it and your son is following in his father’s footsteps. It’s time to call a halt. You can’t be proud of the example.”

When Higgins left the camp, the proprietor shook his hand and thanked him for fearlessly preaching to lumberjacks and to lumber kings.

From the beginning, Mr. Higgins always obtained permission from the company before holding services for the men. At first it was given reluctantly, but, as the years passed, the doors opened more easily. Once, when asking a superintendent for the privilege, he was met with a broad approval, and Higgins, feeling that there was something back of the assent, asked its meaning.

“I want to tell you, Mr. Higgins,” said the official, “that I am superintendent of this company because of your work in the woods. Years ago I was aimless and wasteful, but I heard a word from you that changed it all. I am glad to give

the other boys a chance to hear the same thing that made a man of me. Preach here and send your men here, for we need the encouragement of the gospel."

After service, when the camp had retired, Mr. Higgins often remained in conversation with those who longed to know more of the message he had brought. In privacy many a life was bared and many a soul met God. When the minister was asked to share a lumberjack's bunk, he never refused. He knew that back of the request was a longing for company, perhaps a desire to solve soul problems, or a confession of sin and a plea for pardon. Since the quarters of the men were often very unsanitary, acceptance was no small cross, but it might mean the salvation of a soul, and that was greater than physical comfort.

"Isn't there some way I can make my life count?" asked a young fellow after hearing the Pilot. "I'm sledding in the wrong direction. Give me a lift."

He was first led to the Master, then awakened to the benefits of school. That winter he spent his evenings in study. The following summer he worked in a sawmill where every leisure moment was devoted to his books. The proprietor watched him with interest and sent him to the sawdust pile where he could have more time for his studies.

He was called "the bookworm in the sawdust." A year later he entered school and finally became a successful civil engineer. That camp sermon saved a soul from death and lifted a life into larger usefulness.

In February, 1911, on the north shore of Lake Superior, Higgins was holding a service in a certain camp. The "crew" consisted of one hundred and sixty men—a motley collection of Finns, Poles, Austrians, Swedes, and a few Americans. Two days later the foreman met Higgins again.

"I had a big surprise yesterday," he said. "For the first time since I have been in these woods, I found that lumberjacks are interested in religion. Out in 'the works' I found jacks discussing the meeting you held in the bunk house the night before; later, at the lunch-ground, the topic was religion; and down at the skidway they were going over the same thing. It was a new view to me. I tell you, if your work does nothing more than furnish a decent topic for conversation, it accomplishes a great deal. I wish you could come oftener. It helps. Anything that gives a boost to the awful proposition we loggers have on our hands is a thing to be encouraged. Why, even the scaler, who thinks he is something of an infidel, admitted that the work was doing good. Come again. You're welcome."

On one occasion it was after eight o'clock and a meeting was in full swing when two teamsters entered and took seats by the stove, where they thawed out while listening to the pilot's talk. These men, cold and hungry, with appetites sharpened by the zero air of pine forests, had just returned from a distant point, and on learning that a service was being held, had forgotten the pleasures of appetite that they might feed their starving souls. It was incidents such as this, showing the desires of the men, that put a joyous encouragement into Higgins and made him tireless in his efforts to reach new camps.

At the beginning of the mission, the lumberjacks followed their individual fancy during the service. Higgins preached, while they smoked, mended their clothes, darned their socks, or stalked back and forth to the drinking water, while the hats of the majority remained on their heads. Gradually, almost without suggestion, a change took place. The pipes were put aside, the hats were removed, and the customs of the town churches were followed in the camp gatherings. In one camp, all had removed their hats during the service, except a man who desired to show his disapproval. While the others joined in the spirit of the meeting, he sneeringly vented his contempt. Finally an Irish lumberjack walked over, grabbed

the "skypiece," threw it on the floor and stamped on it; then with unruffled composure he kicked the offender out of the bunk house. Before taking his seat the Irishman quietly said,

"We're going to have peace in these meetings! If you don't think so, just start something and I'll finish it for you."

Higgins' work was like seed sown by the way-side, among thorns, in stony places, and in good ground. The results were in the hands of God, and only in his harvest-time will the increase be known. The seed fell; it sprang into life; the wanderer returned to his distant home, and there, separated from his worst temptations, he turned his face away from sin, and the paths of the prodigal knew him no more. But sometimes, as in the following incident, the men whose wills were strengthened stepped into the limelight, there declared their intentions, and enlisted for Christian service.

Higgins was preaching his challenging message and the camp was in his grip. Only the thunder of his denunciation and the warmth of his pleading suspended the silence of the bunk house. In the midst of the service a woodsman arose and made his way to the side of the preacher. Then came his request.

"I want you to pray for me right now," he

said, with the earnestness of a man who was deeply touched.

Placing his hand on the man's shoulder, Higgins prayed, and when he had finished, the woodsman said,

“Now I want to pray for myself.”

Haltingly he uttered his petition for pardon and received it. Then turning to the listening men he announced, quietly but with decision, “This is the end of my old life. In the future I live for Jesus Christ.”

The following evening the new convert took down his violin and played “Jesus, Lover of my soul.” A new spirit was in the music—a longing that knew where rest was to be found. In respectful silence the men listened. The playing was different, very different, and they wondered, while they felt the touch of the unseen. Finishing the hymn, he opened his Bible and read a chapter. Then, under the inspiration of his new life, he spoke quietly and well, explaining the part he had read. The teachings of his Christian home came back to him, for the Spirit was bringing to his remembrance the message of his Master. All through the winter the convert held nightly meetings, creating an atmosphere of sobriety and right. The campmen wrote to Higgins, telling with pride of the happenings, adding, “Others

have preaching once in a while, but we've got a regular preacher."

Higgins' bunk house services created a diversion for the lonely men, but the minister's visits were far apart, and every day had its long, lonely evening, with no amusement but the greasy playing-cards and oft-told stories. Higgins began to distribute magazines, and the demand for them grew like the movement of a prairie fire. He appealed to the Minnesota churches for help, and their congregations shipped him the accumulation of their attics. These welcome gifts have been continued, so that tons of magazines are sent to the camps every year. Higgins remembered the inland camps which he was unable to visit and sent them boxes of entertainment and information. Lives received an impetus in the new topics, aspirations were awakened, and even the foreign-born found comfort in "reading the pictures."

One day in an Adirondack camp a woman cook came to Higgins with this plea: "I have been here for four months and I have had nothing to read but my Bible. Since I came I have read it through three times."

Here Higgins' Irish wit asserted itself and he interjected, "I wish some of the rest of us were up against the same thing for a while!"

She continued: "Sometimes I get so lonely that

I go down to the wannigan and read the advertising on the tobacco packages. Can't you send me something to read?" Needless to say that, on arriving in town, Higgins' first task was to send her a package of news, amusement, instruction, and happiness.



IX

FIGHTING FOR GOD AND RIGHT

IN those young, boisterous days, when the saloon held the logging village in the palm of its hand, when evils laughed at law, and the wink of the political boss had the authority of royalty, it was Frank Higgins who refused to bend the knee. He rebelled even when victory for righteousness seemed impossible. Better government was the need. Public sentiment had to be aroused, and to arousing it he gave himself, like John the Baptist crying in the wilderness. He was only a voice but he prepared the way. He talked victory to everybody, even after meeting defeat.

Whenever he could get into a betterment fight, Higgins was on hand. Little villages that scarcely knew him found him fighting with them. He asked

nothing for himself, he "just wanted to get into the game." The corrupt officials found him at their heels. To the legislatures he handed protests and suggestions, and in the governor's room he was welcomed, as were also his stories of adventure.

It was up-hill work but Higgins liked it. It was a long fight in which he did not weary. Big odds were against him, yet he lived to see the day when law was respected and evil dared no longer be bold. A sense of humor smoothed the rough pathway, and smiles were the harbingers of victory.

While he hewed at the root—the saloon in politics—he did not neglect the victims of the unwholesome growth, the men who found themselves helpless through appetite, poor through robbery, and physically unfit after their indulgences. These victims were everywhere present, marked with the wages of sin.

A lumberjack, speaking of the sky pilot and his ever-ready assistance, said, "He is a man who never turns a lumberjack down. His job is keeping us out of hell."

It was truly spoken. Higgins believed that to prevent evil was as much a Christian duty as to lift the fallen, and both ends of the task found him present and at work.

This "helping" was the joy of his life. Others might demand entertainment; he created his own diversions and in them he was blessed and called blessed.

"I get a hundred times more out of this than I put into it," he declared to a friend who accompanied him to a meeting. "Aren't the boys good to me? Did you notice old Bill, the shanty boss, whisper to me at breakfast? He said he'd saved two hundred dollars and had it in the bank. It makes me happy to think that old Bill is two hundred dollars away from the poorhouse."

Old Bill had been carried on Higgins' heart as a babe on its mother's bosom. The preacher's face shone as he thought of Bill's two hundred dollars. They meant scores of temptations resisted, cravings rejected, and many, many battles won. In old Bill's victory, Frank Higgins found his own decoration—his Victoria Cross—for he had saved him under fire.

It is easy to feel contempt for those who do not think in harmony with us. Many a reformer has found himself hating his opponents because of the business they represent, and in that attitude has lost his power. But Higgins was a friend to publicans and sinners. He was actually loved by the men whose interests he sought to destroy, and this was because he was a brother to all. It was Hig-

gins whom they asked to bury their dead, and upon him they called for sympathy in the sorrows common to humanity. They respected the fighter who dared to do right when to do right and fight wrong meant the loss of prestige and probable defeat. One day, in a palatial saloon and gambling den, where the man in charge had been acquainted with Mr. Higgins for years, he invited Higgins to take a drink of seltzer water.

"I wouldn't take a drink of water in one of your saloons," replied Higgins. "You know I'm against your whole business."

"We know it," answered the saloon man, "but while you fight us, you do it fair, and although you hurt us, we like you in spite of it."

Men naturally appealed to Frank Higgins for help. They knew he would respond, not as one doing a favor but as the favored one. And this attitude was not assumed, it was the result of an inner desire. Humanity to him was composed of one big family and he recognized his relatives. Therefore when Paddy's "bunky" came to him for help, the pilot was ready to give him all possible assistance.

"Pilot," said the stranger, "I've got a bunky in that booze joint, and the fool is blowing his stake as fast as he can throw it. I can't land him. Give me a lift."

They entered the saloon together where they found Paddy hilariously drunk, his wits afloat with generosity as he treated the saloon loafers. He invited all creation to drink with him and emptied his pockets on the damp, metal counter. The bartender reached toward the roll of bills and silver, but a quicker hand covered the paper money. It was the hand of Higgins.

“I’ll take this for my treat, Paddy.”

“No you don’t,” came the furious reply of the bartender as he rushed to give battle.

“Stand back!” commanded Higgins.

For a moment the bartender paused, then grasping the bung-starter, he advanced with raised weapon, followed by several of the loafers.

“Cut it out, you fools,” roared a big lumberjack who rushed to the side of the preacher. “This is the Pilot, and the man who touches him takes me on and several others.”

An armistice was immediately declared.

The bartender became discreet; he knew that to touch Higgins, the helper of lumberjacks, the friend of every down-and-out, the comforter of robbed and wronged, would be to invite the wrath of unnumbered woodsmen.

“Paddy has had too much booze already,” said Higgins casually, as if riots were as common as beans. “I’ll keep this roll, as Paddy’s banker.

You are a scoundrel to take money from a man who is not in his right mind!" And Higgins led Paddy away to put him to bed.

Next morning Paddy was sober and he said to the pilot, "Somebody went through me last night. They cleaned me out o' every cent an' pinched me hat an' coat. What am I going to do?"

"Robbed you, did they? It couldn't be done, Paddy! When I met you last night you were throwing your money away faster than they could take it from you. You had already lost your coat, and had thrown away your hat."

Paddy's head bent in shame—this was not his first offense.

"But *you're* going home, Paddy. We saved a little for you. Here is the remainder of your roll."

Higgins escorted him to the train, and the saloons knew him no more.

And here is another story of the same sort; scores of such might be told. It was the end of the cutting season, and word came to the preacher that a youngster whose appetite was stronger than his will was "blowing his stake." The lad's mother needed every cent of his earnings. In a saloon, made rich by the profits of robbery, Higgins found the young man flushed with drink, free from all restraint.

"You've had more than enough, Jack. Time you turned in," said Higgins, placing his hand on the fellow's shoulder. "Let's get out of here."

"What's it to you?" burst out the angry bartender. "Mind your own business!"

"*This is my business,*" replied Higgins. "This fellow is too drunk to know what he is doing, so I will take care of him," and suiting his words to action, he led the fellow toward the door.

"I'll see you in blazes before I let you have him," angrily cried the drink-mixer, leaping over the bar. There was cold steel in the gray of Higgins' eyes as he saw the intention of the man, and his closed fist sprang from his side and sent the bartender, with a thud, to the sawdust.

"Here's one of your own to care for!" called the missionary to the saloon keeper. "When he wakes up, tell him never again to interfere with 'the cloth' and its duties. I have to take care of the boys—*that's my business.*"

"Th—that's your business," echoed the youngster as they passed through the door.

The boy was placed on a train, his wages were sent by mail to his waiting mother, and the next day Higgins visited the bartender who became a friend.

Time and again Frank Higgins stood between the men and the leeches who fattened on the blood

and hard labors of men. When in town he visited the saloons to find the helpless. He made the rounds of the gambling houses, to place himself between the tempted and temptation. The hospital wards, where the broken and bruised jacks waited for healing, were not forgotten—there his coming was like the dawning of day, for he brought hope and words of cheer.

In the bunk house meeting it was not all plain sailing. Often high waves of trouble threatened to sink the ship, and only a good seaman could weather the storm and arrive at safe anchorage. Men differed in their thoughts on religion and in their relation to sects, and from these differences arose ill feelings. Catholics wanted no Protestant message. Some objected to their only home—the bunk house—being turned into a church, and vented their feelings in “cat calls.” However, since the majority welcomed Higgins’ ministry, and the majority is supposedly entitled to rule, Higgins did not hesitate to put down the opponents. Sometimes a word kindly spoken was sufficient. Again, a barb in his ready wit gained an easy victory. These milder methods, however, were not always adequate. Dull minds saw in kindness only the spirit of cowardice or folly and invited a contest of physical force. From this Higgins always shrank—not from fear, for fear

was foreign to him. He preferred love. Nevertheless, he believed that where moral suasion failed, physical force became an instrument of virtue; and without fear, yet reluctantly, he used his strong arm for his King.

Once a campman persisted in grinding an ax while Higgins attempted to preach. It was done to annoy, for the lumberjack whistled a lively air, much to his own enjoyment and the disturbance of the camp. Clear thinking was impossible. Higgins stopped and announced a hymn. While the camp sang, he visited the grinder and asked his assistance. Again Higgins began his sermon; again the man at the grindstone opened the counter-attraction. It was a real competition, and the camp was immensely entertained. Again the preacher went to the disturber, this time placing his hand on the man's shoulder. No sooner did the lumberjack feel the touch than he whirled around and struck at the preacher.

"Keep out of this, boys," yelled an Irishman, swinging aloft a peavy. "Give the Pilot a show. I'll brain the first man who interferes."

Higgins evaded the grinder's blow, bent low, and rushed his big opponent. His strong arms closed on the man's waist; in a twinkling he had him in the air, then up-ended him into a barrel of water. It was only a moment's work. There

he held him until the Irishman with the peavy suggested,

“Pilot, if ye don’t want a funeral, ye’d better pull him out an’ roll him.”

With shouts of hilarity, the congregation went back to their places, and Higgins took up the broken thread of his discourse. It was all a part of the day’s work!

When Higgins opened his eyes the following morning, the grinder was standing beside him. “So he has come to finish the row,” thought Higgins. “Now I’m going to find out if I’ve preached my last sermon in this camp,” and he leaped out of bed, expecting another battle.

But the grinder’s hand was extended in apology, and like big boys, for such they were, they shook hands. The fight belonged to yesterday; now they understood each other.

Humanity is an oddity. It encourages its enemies and interferes with its friends. It allows the impostor a free course and blocks the reformer’s path. It wants personal liberty for itself and shackles for the other fellow. So it made trouble for Higgins, whose only motive was to help it.

In a certain camp the French Canadians persistently rejected his overtures, his help, and his message. They were impervious to kindness and had decided that this was to be Higgins’ last ap-

pearance in that camp. They laughed loudly, guffawed while he spoke, whistled, and clapped their hands. What was the use of trying to help such fellows, thought Higgins. But perhaps a personal appeal would still the tempest. The personal appeal, kindly given, counted for naught. Again Higgins attempted to speak, but the noise rose in volumes. Higgins stopped. He quietly rolled up his sleeves with the air of important business. In the silence his heels came down with determination as he walked over to the group. The fire of righteous indignation burned in his erstwhile friendly eyes. The kindly mother in him was asleep, the stern father was aroused. It was zero hour and Higgins was about to go over the top!

“You pea-soup eaters will do one of two things,” he said with force and control. “You will listen to the gospel or take a licking. Speak up! Which do you want?”

“Throw them through the roof, Pilot. We’ll see fair play. One at a time,” yelled a friend.

“Give ‘em a thrashin’ an’ the gospel too,” came another’s advice.

“You’ve got to puncture the skins of that outfit to get decency into them,” called a third. “Crawl into the top bunks, boys, where you can see better.”

Then came silence, the silence of the dead.

Higgins' muscles stood out in corded heaps, his jaw was defiant. Fearless as right itself he stood, and the disturbers saw a champion they dared not engage. Their eyes dropped and Higgins smiled:

“I'd rather preach, anyway.”

The long indifference to the saloon was dying; sentiment was gathering against it; “dry” ideas were fruiting, and the whisky men read the hand-writing on the wall. Up there in the woods men were adopting the pilot's message and through it were transformed. Down in the towns the evil element deplored a loss of business. Higgins stood out as a leader; he must be turned aside; he could not be silenced; he was above bribery. Some other way must be devised. So, when the state legislature discussed the opening of a home for drunkards, the saloonmen became hopeful. They saw a way out. Why not make Frank Higgins superintendent? He was a master of men, many of the inmates would be lumberjacks, and he could not refuse the larger salary. It was just the thing to shelve Higgins!

But Higgins turned the offer down—turned it down so hard that he jarred the politicians in his refusal. “I want to make the men Christians as well as sober. There I could only help a handful; out in the woods I am in touch with thousands. I

wouldn't give up preaching in the camps for the governorship."

To shoot straight you must see only one thing—the object; divided interest means missing the mark. Higgins had many opportunities to become rich. In his travels through the unmarked forests he had learned the woods as few others knew them. The government had thrown open to settlement thousands of rich homesteads, and timber claims were to be had for the taking, yet he never filed a claim, although he knew where the best homesteads were to be found. It was men, not money, he wanted.

A wealthy logger felt that, if Higgins could be secured in a partnership, he could vastly increase his fortune, through Higgins' ability to handle the workingmen. He proposed to take him into the company on very liberal terms, Higgins to invest himself against the logger's capital. The terms were so generous that few men would have rejected them, but Higgins was not even tempted. He said, "If I am to do my duty, I'll have to continue the fight for God and man, not for myself and my pocket-book."

And so he remained the sky pilot. He had no time to make money—his job was making men.



X

HELPING THE DOWN-AND-OUTS

THE dictionary defines a slum as "a low quarter of a city." The slum of the old logging village had no such modest dimensions; sometimes it was one half, sometimes three quarters, and occasionally the whole place. There, if you wished a meal, you could secure it only in the saloon. Over the grog-shops were the guest rooms into which the noise and smell intruded and would not be denied. In the barrooms, or convenient to them, were the gambling devices, and somewhere in the background was the "snake-room," the retreat where the drunken and drugged jacks were thrown to sleep off the poison of dope and booze. A slum indeed! Not in a city—this was in the heart of the wilderness.

The "snake-room" deserves more than a pass-

ing mention. It was an institution, a moving-picture of collected misery, where drunken and tormented men lay upon a filthy floor. These men had been willing victims, aiding in their own stupor (hastened sometimes by doped liquor) and their own robbery. When they came down river in the spring, the saloons flourished and profiteered by doping, short-changing, and deft pickpocketing. The barrooms overflowed into the "snake-rooms" and there men occasionally died, smothered under their unconscious comrades. One can't describe the scene. A person must see it even to imagine it.

Frank Higgins often went to the snake-rooms, searching for men who had been defeated by temptation. Preaching was well enough in its place, but this called for the ministry of shoulders and arms and legs. As a shepherd he sought the wandering sheep, and when he found them he laid them on his shoulders, rejoicing in his strength and in his burden. It was in a snake-room that he found Al Moore, whom he bore to his homestead near the village. Moore was not an agreeable burden for Moore had been on a protracted spree. Moore was seeing things and fighting them in his ravings—horrible, misshapen beings which were very real to him. His mind was cooked with whisky and had become a place



AN UP-TO-DATE, MOBILE, SANITARY CAMP IN THE FAR WEST

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for sights and creatures born in the ferment of alcohol.

Moore had a wife and family. Before drink robbed him of property and decency, he had saved and prospered. Now he was reduced to poverty.

For two long days and two longer nights the missionary sat by Moore's side, quieting and helping him back to sanity. Higgins knew that Moore would demand his accustomed liquor, and on being refused would go in search of it. He accordingly prepared his defenses by gathering together every piece of Moore's clothing and sending it out to a neighboring house.

With returning strength, Moore sought his clothing everywhere. It was a vain endeavor. He pleaded with Higgins. Higgins was adamant. The family had been sent away and Moore was alone with the relentless missionary. A sense of helplessness settled upon him and finally he came to himself. By speaking of things that were then mere memories, the minister led him back to the pleasant years before whisky entered his life; he brought to mind his prosperous days and his happy home. Gradually, by those invisible cords, Higgins drew him on until at last they prayed together at the feet of One who gives freedom and forgiveness. When they arose they were brothers in Christ Jesus.

Moore knew he was free. He also knew his weakness and, wishing to cast off the old associations, he migrated with his family to Canada. A letter from his wife told of his life there. "Both my husband and son united with the Presbyterian church here, and when they brought my husband from a northern camp, bruised and dying, his faith held fast to the Savior who took him from the pit."

Money was god in the villages, the golden calf was its image; and the shrines were numerous where the worshipers offered their wages in sacrifice. It was respectable to do wrong and make money by it. Greed was the first commandment of the law and the second was like unto it: get all you can and get it quickly. Seeing two lumberjacks spending freely in a notorious saloon, Higgins drew near. A gambler immediately added himself to the group to defeat, if possible, the evident intention of the minister.

"Getting too full to handle money, boys," said Higgins. "Better let me be your banker till morning."

"That's a good idea," said the older man, who passed over his money and valuables, among which was a Confederate medal conferred for bravery. Higgins took the Southerner to a hotel and put him to bed, then returned to the saloon.

The soldier's companion was nowhere in sight. He had already been drugged, robbed, and dragged into the snake-room where Higgins found him. In the few minutes' absence the gambler had been diligent in business.

"Where is this man's money and watch?" asked the minister.

"You don't think I went through him, Mr. Higgins," countered the gambler.

"You had him in charge. You ought to know."

It was a wide-open town with the saloons in full power. Justice had no influence, being a non-resident. The money and watch were gone beyond recall. There was nothing to do but put the lumberjack to bed and pray for the day when the saloon and its influence would no longer exist.

Weak men, knowing they could not fight temptation, leaned heavily on the pilot. They depended on him to escort them past the saloons and see them safely to the trains.

"When will you be in town, Pilot?"

"Wednesday."

"I want you to see me through. I'll come right up to the house."

"That's right, Billy, depend on me."

Since they could not trust themselves, they made him their banker, and Higgins sent their money to their homes. The pilot's home became a van-

tage ground, and day or night the men, not always sober, came for help, advice, or to deposit their funds. Mrs. Higgins was much alone, owing to her husband's long trips, and to be awakened in the dead of night by strange voices demanding admission was a common occurrence. One night when she was alone a noise awakened her. Some one was trying to effect an entrance. The presence in the house of considerable money which the pilot held in trust for certain lumberjacks added to her fears. Mrs. Higgins cautiously investigated and discovered a man on the woodshed roof. He was a drunken lumberjack who, in his blurred condition, was searching for the pilot. He knew Higgins lived there; he needed him; and, in attempting to find him, he gave Mrs. Higgins an unforgettable experience.

Another experience was with old man Johnson, who had been a prodigal all his life. Now old age was approaching, or perhaps wisdom had been born with years. Whatever the cause, he came to Higgins for help.

"Mr. Higgins, I've come to Robbers' Roost to get cleaned out again," he said in greeting. "Every year it's been the same. I can't keep my money. I have two hundred and seventy-five dollars, but I won't have a cent in the morning. They'll go through me for it all."

He wept as he sat by the fire—a tired man, weather-beaten, weary, and very old.

“You will have every cent of it,” replied the positive minister. “I’ll run the game this time. Hand over your cash—every cent of it. I’m your banker. You can’t have your money until you’re ready to place it in something permanent.”

“Glory be!” ejaculated the old man. “We’ve done it, Higgins! I’ve made a safe landing—the first time in years,” and he handed over his wages.

While they sat there rejoicing in the dawn of a better future, a saloon “tout”¹ came to the house in search of old man Johnson.

“What do you want with him?” inquired the minister.

“A little business,” replied the man non-committally.

“Johnson has transacted all his business. I have every cent of his cash and your whole gang can’t get it from me. Now, you bloodsucker, hike or I’ll kick you off the premises!” And the door slammed in the fellow’s face.

“Made a landin’, Pilot, but too close for comfort,” said old man Johnson.

One February day in a lumber town incidents crowded one upon another in a way that kept the

¹An agent for a low resort.

pilot hastening through all its hours. The demands began at the breakfast table, when a logger told of a workman who was playing the fool at the games and at the bar. The logger treated the matter indifferently, but Higgins made the round of the saloons, found the jack, and took him to a lodging-house. Next came a hospital visit, where more than a score of the boys were gladdened by the fruit Higgins brought and were encouraged by his prayers and his presence. While there he heard of one of the jacks who had left the hospital that morning, too weak to work, without credit, and generally distrusted because of his former dissolute life. Higgins searched until he found him, placed him in charge of the hotel keeper, and became security for the bill. Later, another woodsman who was finding the way of the transgressor no easy road to travel, was given assistance and advice. The day ended in a gambling den where a traveling man, who at roulette had lost his own and his employer's money, was saved from suicide by the prompt action of Higgins. For Higgins, like his Master, was touched with the feeling of men's infirmities; and "he went about doing good," asking no selfish return.

To his enemies he gave the same treatment that he extended to his friends. Men who had lied about him, who had disturbed his meetings and

made the "sledding hard," were brought into enthusiastic friendship through his generous, open hand. Once, when the word went about that Higgins had found a violent opponent in need and had succored him, there were many who would not believe the report so they asked Higgins.

"Sure," replied the unresenting Higgins. "When God gave me a chance to help a man, do you think I'd turn it down?"

In the old days, when the dog-team played its part, in a camp near Tenstrike, Minnesota, worked Quebec, a powerful French Canadian, a bigot by training and intolerant by nature. He hated Higgins because he was a Protestant, and as a disturber of meetings Quebec had no equals. His profanity and Billingsgate distressed the whole camp. But he was one of the men with whom the pilot did not care to try physical conclusions. Quebec was elastic, tough, tempered metal, and a physical leader in camp and on the river. It was better to be discreet than beaten; so both Quebec and Higgins apparently thought, for each avoided the contest. Higgins tried in many ways to win the man who returned his kindness with sneers and profanity.

In Tenstrike, on a bitter Sunday night, Higgins went to the hotel barn to care for his dogs before retiring. Cakes of ice littered the yard near

the ice-house; and, as he carefully picked his way, he stumbled over the body of a man. The body was cold and apparently lifeless. Higgins ran to the hotel for assistance. Quebec sat on the end of the bar, swinging a lighted lantern between his legs. He was about to return to camp after an evening in the saloon.

"Hurry, Quebec," cried Higgins. "Bring your lantern. There's a dead or dying man lying out yonder on the ice."

Quebec hastened after the preacher.

"Take hold of his feet," suggested Higgins.

But Quebec objected. "No. You carry him," he said. "I'll light the way."

The man still lived. Higgins worked over him until consciousness returned. While Higgins worked, Quebec sat near, holding his lantern and studying the preacher.

"This fellow will need to stay here for a few days till he gets over his drunk and the freezing," remarked Higgins to the hotel man. "He has no money. Charge the bill to me."

The next time Higgins visited the camp in which Quebec worked, Quebec was there and he was silent. Higgins momentarily expected an outbreak but none came. The campmen waited, wondering when the fireworks would begin, but Quebec listened to the sermon—the most attentive hearer.

The meeting was almost disappointing! Even Higgins wondered if Quebec were sick. At the close of the meeting he motioned to the pilot.

"How's our man?" Quebec asked.

"Oh, he's all right."

"There it is, Pilot," said the Frenchman, thrusting out his hand. "That's yours now. Will you shake it? After what I saw in Tenstrike, I'm settled. You're willing to do for us poor fools what we ain't got sense enough to do for ourselves. Anything I can do for you, Pilot, I'll do."

And maybe the camp didn't enjoy the scene when the two big fellows shook hands!

From that day on, it wasn't safe to interfere with Higgins' meetings when Quebec was around. That would have been the same as slapping Quebec's face, and no north woodsman was ever insane enough to do that. In many ways Quebec showed his admiration for the missionary. Once he saw Higgins coming along a sidewalk thronged with lumberjacks. Quebec cast them right and left, without gentleness or ceremony, at the same time explaining his action: "Open up the road for the Pilot. He's made easy sledding for many a one of us, and I'll road-monkey for him." Needless to say, the way was cleared.

Among the campmen, shut off from the mails, separated from amusements, far from home, friends, and the common things that make life pleasant, Higgins found his opportunity to enter into the hearts of men. He was fortunate in that his interests were always the interests of the man with whom he talked. Strangers told him their troubles without reserve or reticence; men held nothing back. So with all their thoughts before him, spurred on also by his own compassion, he could easily aid in the solving of problems. His was a sympathetic nature lighted with glowing optimism.

In one of the camps Higgins discovered a young fellow, one of whose feet had been amputated. The man was in the throes of despondency; he felt that all his chances of success were gone, now that he was crippled. His days were somber, his nights were black, until Higgins spoke, after hearing his story:

“Why, man, God has something better in store for you than being a lumberjack. You are going to go through life by the power of your brain, instead of being propelled by your legs. Don’t you see it?” Higgins awakened him so that he caught the vision, applied himself to books, and later became a successful physician.

Was there anything in that *bleary* crowd of

drinkers, leaning for support against the bar, to call out affection? Yet—"I love these fellows," said Higgins, and his eyes confirmed his words. "I love to pick men out of the gutter. It's more fun than helping Pharisees. And it pays. You can help a man best when he finds himself helpless, when he is disgusted with himself. Then his pride is gone, the bottom is knocked out of his little world, and there is no place for his feet. If I can get at him then, it's easy to land him for God. You see, when a man is sure of himself, he has no time for religion, but when his cocksureness is gone, when he is 'walking on his uppers,' that's the time for Frank Higgins to get in his work for Jesus Christ. So I hang around those places. I've been criticized for doing it. They say it is no place for a minister. But the dirt doesn't shock me—I'm thinking of clean souls. Of course, there is lots of profanity, but it isn't the words I hear but the words I use that I have to account for. I know affairs are foul and coarse and brutal. Sometimes the sordidness of the saloon arouses in me a desire to kill, but most of the time that side never touches me. I'm too busy looking for an opening into a heart. I love these fellows. I just can't help it."

And the love of Higgins begat love in the men. "I would give twenty years of my life if I could

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have the devotion of the men as Higgins has it," one of the camp missionaries exclaimed. "The Master gave the secret; it is a wonderful one and worth learning; 'If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.' "



XI

AND MEN SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

SOME things cannot be hidden. Frank Higgins' work was staged in the unknown camps, far from the daily press, far from the sound of cities; nevertheless, it came to the light of publicity. When transformed men cast off, like filthy rags, their lawlessness, others naturally inquired the reason. Homes in all parts of the land were gladdened by a word from, or the return of, wandering sons, brothers, and husbands, and the home folks learned that Higgins was back of the movement. When worthless workers became industrious, honest, and reliable, when grouchers whistled at their work, and talked on wholesome topics, employers could not shut their eyes to the mission that changed problems into dividends.

Emerson of Concord said something about the

world making a path to the door of the man whose work was good. In this missionary to the camps, Emerson's remark was again verified, for the wilderness worker, without advertising and seeking no honors, became the center of a widespread interest.

At Cass Lake, Minnesota, a friend of the forest missionary entered into conversation with Mr. Thomas Nary, a man of prominence in the lumber industry of the state. He wished to learn the logger's thought concerning Higgins and his mission, and this is what Mr. Nary said: "When Mr. Higgins first asked to hold services in our camps, I told him it was useless. He persisted in his request and I reluctantly granted permission. I felt, however, that nothing could help the men. I have changed my opinion, for Higgins' work has introduced new possibilities. In such work is the hope of the lumberjacks. A few more men like Frank Higgins and we would have less of hell in the pineries."

"Is the camp mission accomplishing anything?" a contractor who was the employer of many men was asked.

"Well, rather! Some of the jacks are savin' money, takin' occasional baths, an' can pass a saloon without battin' an eye. Ain't these results?"

Another logger answered the same question; "This preaching has braced many a weak back, and I know a number of honest men that, in the old days, I couldn't trust out of my sight."

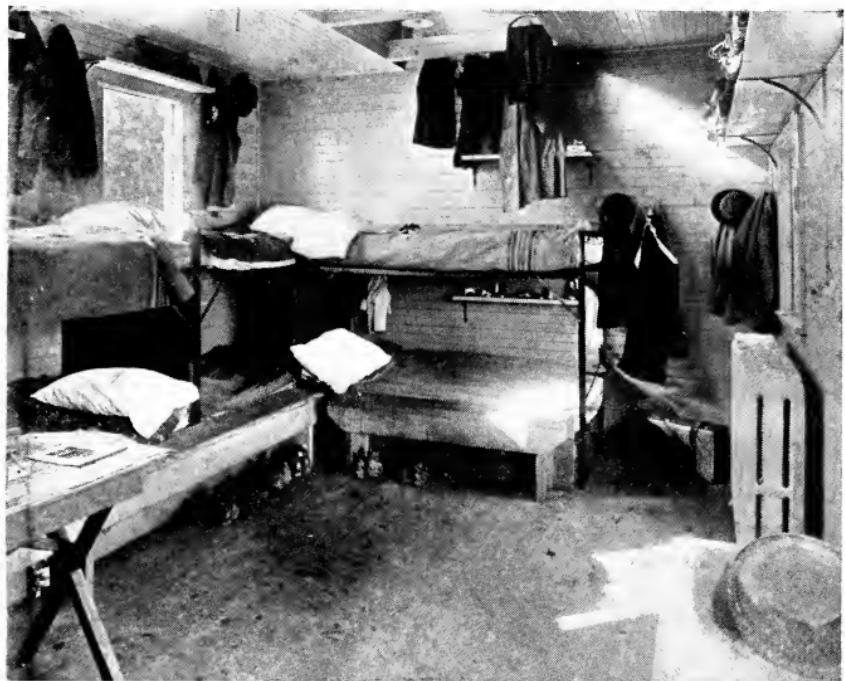
Logging is a dollar-creating proposition, not an organization to benefit humanity. It is sordid in that it destroys beauty for utility's sake. Beautiful woodland scenes are viewed as logs, and the giants of centuries are shorn of glory, becoming the food of saws and finally marketable board feet. Sentiment has no place in lumbering. If the camp mission had not helped the workmen, the companies would have been the first to know it. When, however, they found their men more satisfied, cleaner, better workers, the companies encouraged the visits of the preachers and passed the word to other concerns. The work was helping morale and morale meant more dollars. The corporations were not interested in the spiritual side; that was secondary, for "business is business"! Because the mission helped the industry, the companies encouraged it and contributed to its success.

All through the long years of the past, the logging companies have been guilty, with here and there an exception, of scanty attention to the question of housing. Too many, far too many, men were compelled to sleep under the same roof.

Personal cleanliness was impossible because no provision had been made for such an urgent need as bathing. In the bunks, men were not the only living creatures. The sleeping quarters had little merit beyond sheltering the men from wind and rain.

Poorly ventilated, foul-smelling, infested camps were the rule when Higgins began his work. It is not fair to credit Frank Higgins with all the changes that have been wrought; others have helped greatly, but to him must be given a meed of praise. He, at least, was one of the first, perhaps the first, publicly to describe camp conditions to the outside world. He talked with absentee owners, men who had never seen the inside of their own camps, and secured their personal interest and help. He made suggestions to foremen and officials, and gradually improvements were introduced.

In the newer camps of the far west (though not in all of them) a marvelous movement has begun. Sanitation and order have obtained a prominent place. The workmen are housed in smaller groups and privacy becomes possible. Shower baths add to self-respect. The long evenings and longer Sundays have become bearable through recreation rooms. Steam heat, running water, and electric light are parts of the camp equip-



A MODERN CAMP, WITH STEAM HEAT, GOOD BEDS, AND ADEQUATE VENTILATION

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ment. Clean white sheets, washed blankets, and iron bedsteads with mattresses, have robbed the former pests of their time-honored immunity. There are camps where no workman is admitted until he has first taken a shower bath and his clothing has been fumigated.

The filthy camp has not entirely disappeared. There are some owners who are impervious to reason, to the gospel of cleanliness, and the march of improvement. Such will still continue to rear their abominations; but the larger companies, with few exceptions, have seen the light and are following the gleam. If Frank Higgins had done nothing more than hastened the coming of this better day, he would have earned the lumberjacks' eternal gratitude.

The idea has grown beyond the mere question of housing. Out of it has come a welfare movement which includes the recreations and education of the workers. This phase has been fostered largely by the Young Men's Christian Association, and secretaries have been placed in a few western camps.

Appreciation came to Higgins personally. Praise touched him deeply, awakening a spirit of self-depreciation. He seemed unaware of having done unusual work. It all appeared commonplace to him. He claimed no credit even for his big

endeavors—he did not know how to pose as a hero. All compliments made him conscious of his littleness; they did not puff him up; one might almost say they humiliated him.

Once, near the close of a heart-breaking winter that had demanded overmuch of his strength, Higgins found himself going to the camp with aching muscles, unsteady step, and throbbing head. He was wretched, nauseated with sickness, and scarcely able to travel against the wind-driven snow. No shelter offered itself and there would be none until the distant camp was reached. How he covered the miles he never knew. A haze crowded his recollection, blurring the hours. When at last he reached the camp-clearing, he was spent; his body could go no farther and he fell forward, unconscious. There the lumberjacks found him lying in the snow. With rough kindness they carried him to shelter, put him to bed, and wondered how they could minister to his necessities. They wanted to do much for the man who had done much for them, they had little to do with, and the case was urgent.

In the bunk house the men discussed the pilot's condition.

“Whisky's a good thing for one that's ailin',” they hazarded. But every man knew that whisky wouldn't keep in that camp.

It was the same with all the remedies suggested; they were not to be obtained.

“We can’t give him medicine, for we haven’t got it,” said a Christian sawyer, “but I’ll tell you, boys, we can pray for the man who is always praying for us.”

Then came silence. The idea gripped these men unused to prayer. Helpless to do, wishing to do much, why could they not pray for the pilot? And because they knew not how to pray, they were silent in the presence of their great perplexity.

“We’ve never logged much on that land,” said a driver. Turning to the sawyer, “Johnson, you start the deal, for you are onto that game. Say it out loud and we’ll sort of keep you company.”

And so, in the voice of one, the whole camp united its petition for the health of the man who was always praying for them.

When Higgins heard of the praying lumberjacks he wept, and when he told of the incident his eyes dimmed. “Doesn’t it make a fellow humble to meet with a thing like that?”

The lumberjacks are wanderers, fixed to no place or position. Minnesota may know them this winter and the Pacific coast or Southern camps the following summer. They are birds of passage, nesting in the forest camps. Many states receive their labors and few their citizenship. At first

Frank Higgins worked in central Minnesota, but the restless jacks in other places wanted religious services and other missionaries were enlisted to meet the increasing demands. A camp preacher was placed in the lumber district of Maine; Montana's scattered camps received services; while Idaho, Washington, and Oregon also became centers for camp preaching. The Synod of New York organized the work in the Adirondacks and the Synod of Michigan appointed its messengers of hope.

This is the present extent of the effort made to reach the woodsmen, and this covers only a small part of the great lumber field. Lumbering is an important industry in two thirds of our states, and only eight of them have the assistance of organized effort. A good beginning has been made along the lines blazed by Higgins, but only a beginning. Perhaps, in the wider lines of the Inter-church World Movement, the day is not far distant when new states will enter on the work and the great opportunities of the hour will then be seized for Christ and his church. May the day be hastened, for the need is vital and very present.

The work has proved its own worth. It needs no justification even in states where it has not yet entered. The old-timers everywhere are always ready to welcome it. Speaking of his first trip to

the State of Washington, Higgins said: "In a town where no religious organization was at work, I held service in the dance hall. There were seventy-five present, sixty of whom were woodsmen. After the meeting two lumberjacks hailed me. 'Hello, Pilot! We're from Minnesota. Heard you preach in the Clearwater Camps back there. We're the ones that rustled the crowd for you to-night.' On another occasion I was to speak in the open air. An old Minnesota campman brought a pitcher of lemonade and placed it by my side. After the meeting he invited me to his home and wanted me to make it mine while I labored in that place."

Until the spring of 1909, Frank Higgins devoted almost all his time to actual work in the camps, allowing himself only occasional visits to the near-by churches, where he presented the story of the woodsmen. The many invitations to "gad about the country" did not appeal to him; he preferred the boys and the woods, where he was happiest when telling the story of redemption. He was too busy to respond to the call of the cities.

The demand, however, became insistent; and in 1909 the Board of Home Missions arranged an itinerary through the eastern churches, where he met a welcome that amazed even his most enthusi-

astic friends. A secretary of the Board said, "I do not know of any other home missionary who has so stirred the churches with the story of frontier work. It is not possible for him to respond to the numerous invitations that are flooding the office."

This rough man of the forest made a deep and lasting impression on the cultured and wealthy churches. He was lionized, accepted by rich and poor, and was equally at home in the rescue mission and in the mansion. When he rose to speak at the Social Union of Philadelphia in the Bellevue-Stratford, he said: "I'm not used to all this fuss and feathers, and I'd be scared to death if it weren't for one thing; I know more about my subject than any of you, and while I stick to that I'm safe. I assure you, gentlemen, I'm going to stick to my text."

When the news of successes drifted back to Minnesota, his friends wondered how this sudden popularity would affect him. His life had been a constant struggle. Sacrifice had trod on the heels of sacrifice. The scant praise that had come to him had been the embarrassed words of simple folk, of rough men, of publicans and sinners. Would he be spoiled,—changed from the simple, free-handed, lovable fellow into a vanity-possessed man? This was the question of many. A wealthy

lumberman wrote him with all the tenderness of a father:

“MY DEAR BOY FRANK:

“I know you are a man, almost as old as myself, but to me you will always be a big, lovable boy. In these days of triumph, may God keep you and send you back to us the same boy that went away. The plaudits of men and the praise of new people must not lift you off your feet. This is your time for prayer so that prosperity shall not change you. I am afraid that all this attention may unconsciously work in you a feeling of your own strength, and we are praying that it will drive you, in weakness, to cling closer. You were used of God as you were, and if you so remain he will use you still more.”

And a lumberjack wrote to him:

“DEAR SKY PILOT HIGGINS:

“We’ve heard how you’re hitting it high in the east and we’re interested. We knew you’d make good. Any windjammer who can log with us can break a safe load anywhere. Don’t let the fizz go to your head; keep it below the belt. If your hat pinches, bolt for the timber. We’re glad you are *it*, we wanted you to be, and we knew you had the right bark mark. Keep cool, hew to the line, and don’t get punky or you’ll be left with the slashings.”

All these fears were groundless. His friends should have known better than to doubt him. Nothing changed him; he was the same big boy, a little wiser and broader-minded, but of unchanged spirit.

While in the east he might, perhaps, have passed for an easterner; but even when far from the pineries, his thoughts were ever with "his boys" and he rejoiced when the time came to shoulder his pack-sack and tramp to the camps.

On his return he told of his trip, interspersing the narration with inimitable comments. Most of all he laughed over the "breaks" he made. One of them was as follows: A dinner given in his honor was more elaborate than any he had ever attended. Near the end of the meal he was congratulating himself that he had escaped its many pitfalls, when a fine, cut-glass finger-bowl, in which floated a rose, was proffered to him. Higgins, unaware of its purpose, looked admiringly at the rose, then he took the flower and placed it in his buttonhole. On looking around, he saw the next guest daintily dipping her finger-tips in her bowl. Then he knew why the other guests were consciously busy with needless actions. He realized that he had made a mistake.

"So that's the idea," he laughed, "a bath, eh? That's another good one on me. Well, if you want

a lumberjack to take a bath, you'll have to provide a bigger tub."

Higgins often slipped off a log, but he always bobbed up smiling.

The churches saw more of Higgins after his first trip east. They found that he possessed rare ability and awakened a genuine interest in frontier missions. He was a part of the life he described. The tang and spice of pine flavored his speech. He was a breeze from the big woods,—human, inspired, lovable, and on fire with zeal for his "boys." Others caught his unselfish spirit and unselfishly lent him assistance. On a number of occasions he addressed the General Assembly, speaking with the same telling effect and as forcefully as if addressing the men of the bunk houses.

In behalf of the work, he visited Canada and England, where his story met a hearty welcome, resulting in a multitude of invitations to address churches all over the British Isles. Men saw the generous soul, seeking not its own, and knew that he deserved the "well done, good and faithful servant."





XII

THE MARKS OF THE MASTER

DURING the fall of 1913, the first symptoms of the malady which caused Frank Higgins' death made their appearance. He was at that time in Princeton, New Jersey, where he had lectured to the Seminary students. As he passed out of Miller Chapel, a depression in the sidewalk caused him to stumble, and a severe pain shot through his left shoulder. Careful examination failed to reveal the seat of the trouble. From that time on he was never free from discomfort. The following March, while on his way to the western camps, his train was wrecked near Spokane. Higgins received minor bruises and was sent to a hospital where the X-ray made clear the old trouble in the shoulder. It was sarcoma. Later, an operation, which resulted in

the removal of a portion of the left clavicle, gave temporary relief and hope. In less than three weeks he was again on the platform, pleading the cause of the woods. But his once powerful frame was forced slowly to give up its strength, although his spirit retained the old-time vigor and enthusiasm. As the fall approached, the right collar-bone became the seat of distress. A second operation revealed the same condition there.

The hard, body-breaking labor of former days was presenting its demands for payment. Those heavy loads, carried over many snowy trails to give comfort to the wayward foresters, were the direct cause of Frank Higgins' death at the age of forty-nine. Where the shoulder-straps of the packs had pressed, there the disease appeared. He was dying, bearing in his body the marks of the Master. He had lived for a cause and for that cause he died on the fourth of January, 1915.

He was faithful unto the end. Although suffering greatly, he insisted to the last in presenting the lumberjacks' cause. At North East, Pennsylvania, Higgins could scarcely stand while making an address, yet never did he speak with such conviction. His bodily vigor was absent and in its place a pervading quiet had come.

Tenderly, lovingly he pleaded, the same earnest Higgins but strangely, grandly new. The same,

yet different, re-made, spiritually refined. Those who heard him knew the pilot's feet were touching another shore. His last drive was almost in, his contract was cut, and the landing was in sight. A few days later, when leaving New York on his way to Bryn Mawr for what proved to be his last speaking engagement, the beloved sky pilot was forced by weakness to call a porter to his assistance.

As the colored man took his satchel, Higgins said, "Brother, I'm about all in. I'll have to lean on you," and he put his arm over the supporting shoulders of the negro.

When they came to the train, Higgins offered the customary tip, but the porter waved it aside. "I couldn't take *your* money."

"Why not?" asked the astonished Higgins. "Isn't it good?"

"Don't you know? You called me *brother*; you asked about my mother, my wife, my children. I just couldn't take *your* money."

When Higgins returned to New York, he needed assistance far more than when he went to Bryn Mawr, but he didn't have to ask for it. The same colored brother saw him, ran to his assistance, and almost carried him to a taxi-cab. Again Higgins offered a tip and again the porter waved it aside.

“I couldn’t take *your* money; you called me ‘brother.’ ”

Higgins had paid his way, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with brotherhood—a coin of the Kingdom of Heaven.



